

## THE SLEEP OF REASON

How a young man just out of the University becomes secretary to a Congressman in Washington and gets involved in the toils of the Un-American Activities Committee is the theme of this satirical comedy in which for once McCarthyism is not denounced, but laughed at.



# THE SLEEP OF REASON

*A novel*

*by*

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TO  
FRANK TAYLOR

The sleep of reason produces monsters.

*Old Spanish Proverb.*

# I

At home in his own world he walked casually across the mottled campus with diploma in hand, his robe swinging like a bell. The satisfied parents of other boys strolled slowly down the shaded walks, proud to think it was their money had shored up these academic ruins against the wash of time and illiteracy. Fathers mumbled in loud voices.

As he approached his rooms and the remembered sonorities of commencement speakers grew dim, he indulged himself in morbidity—visions of a dry old age, omnipresent death: those banal ideas that are the result of too much reading in seventeenth-century poetry, a species of literature which destroys the vigour of our young men, but endows them with a curious passion. They had rather be seduced than be dead, for example, and seem to feel that honour, like a ukelele, has no place in a love affair.

Climbing the dark stairs to his rooms, thinking of worms, the idea of departure intruded. There was a train he had to make, having promised his father he would arrive on a certain day. He sighed at the head of the stairs, a little frightened now at the thought

of going out into the world that would be, he was sure, less comfortable than any he had known before. He was a familiar of two worlds: home and college; both had been such pleasant places. Now he had to enter that fantastic world whose centre was the weekly pay-cheque, and he approached it like a doubting missionary arriving on the pagan isle.

His rooms had already the bleak, deserted look: angular dusty ghosts of prints on the walls, an open suitcase on a chair. It was ready for the next occupant: some bright-faced youth, he thought suddenly, already old. He rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand. It was those damned worms. He decided he really ought to think of Emerson occasionally.

He placed the diploma carefully, with a heart-breaking, boyish attempt at neatness, among the pyjamas and shirts that cluttered the suitcase. He went to the window for one final look at the familiar scene below. The green lawns were pocked with people in light-coloured clothing. The old trees that grudgingly went green each spring placed their amoeba-shaped shadows on the grass and walks. The trees, like the ideas of many of his professors, were relics of Colonial times. At his twenty-fifth class reunion, he thought, he would have come to admire both.

Reaction and false teeth were the sure signs of senility, he decided, fastening his suitcase. When he left his rooms, he could not bear to close the door; neither did he want to leave it open for any eyes to see; like a liberal diplomat, he pulled it half shut.

There was a line of young men with the rented academic robes over their arms, waiting to turn them in at the office. The show was over. He put the suitcase in a corner and took his place, listened to his contemporaries speaking with fervid distaste of the businesses they were now to go into. They all had fathers who were taking them in and they were all to start at the bottom, as their fathers had before them. It was tradition: three months in the mill before entering the office.

Harrison Forbes had already purchased a lunch-pail. "Black and without frills," he said, cutting the air with a straight stroke of his hand to show the clean lines of it. "And the Oxford Press edition of Hopkins' poems fits perfectly in the bottom, under the sandwich compartment."

Harry Lister said, "It's all very well for you guys, and I am consumed with envy at the thought of you entering those offices reeking with that air of tradition only two generations can give to a place. But give a thought to my plight. Daddy is a doctor."

"No question about it. It's tough when you come from a professional family."

"What are you going to do, Harry?"

"Daddy wants me to come into the office and handle the business end of things for him. But I don't know that I'm cut out for it. You either have to be Machiavellian or brash when dealing with doctors—split fees and all that—and I'm neither. Daddy also has a seat on the stock exchange, and

he's offered me that. But I don't know. It's such a ragtail kind of thing. Anyone can get one who has the money.

Harry turned in the robe and stuffed the receipt in his pocket. His friends were waiting for him at the door with sympathetic faces.

"Have you thought of staying on, Harry, and going through the medical school?"

"What about that, Harry? Why not become a doctor?"

"No, no," Harry said, screwing up his face with distaste. "I don't *want* a business career."

Well, it's better than nothing, Harry's friends said as they departed; and Harry had to admit that it almost was.

Evans got rid of the cap and gown, and with the receipt in one hand and the suitcase in the other he walked quickly across the campus. When he came to the great wrought-iron gate he slowed his pace. Then, squaring his shoulders, he walked through and out on to the sidewalk of the town. It was the unpleasant world he had been thinking about, rough and pushing.

Good Humour men careened carelessly around corners. Whistles blew. There were clocks everywhere. At the taxi stand he took the first cab and went directly to the railroad station, where he checked his suitcase and confirmed his reservation. He did not trust the railroads; it was a lack of confidence he had learned from his father, who owned coal-mines.

A young woman who seemed to be efficient assured him that Room 8, Car 212, was indeed his. He went away dissatisfied, saying to himself: We will see about that. He had a sudden vision of his children, years hence, saying: Father never did like the railroads.

With the suitcase safely deposited and the brass check in his pocket he was able to relax and walk slowly through the city's narrow streets. He walked toward a certain hotel, where, he knew, his particular circle of friends would be waiting for him. He liked that hotel: it had sinks with marble tops, and Henry James had slept there.

When he entered the bar Harlow Williston said, "Ah, here's Evans Howells, that odd Welshman from Sewickley, Pennsylvania. Sit down, Evans Howells. I always use your name, Evans Howells, to test my degree of drunkenness. At prep. school I had a room-mate who had a girl in New York whose telephone exchange was Schuyler something-or-other. He knew that if he could say Schuyler to the operator he would be able to speak decently to her mother. His girl's mother, that is. I don't believe I have to tell anyone here present that the operator's mother was of little interest to my room-mate. I had the prior claim." Harlow smiled wistfully, remembering the operator's mother. "She was a ruin sort. We were awfully close for a while."

"I think I speak for all of us," Evans said, including his friends in a glance, "when I say that we feel as if we've known her for years."

"She was a part of our growing up," Sam Palfrey said in his doleful voice, nodding sadly.

They drank to her. No one smiled. They were always very serious when they joked, considering it a necessary imbalance.

"I think," said William Palgrave, "I think that for the sake of Evans, who has only just arrived, and the bleak future, which we must all soon face, that another drink ought to perhaps be ordered."

"Admirable. Admirable," they said; it was one of their favourite words, having found it, in Henry James.

"Scotch," they said, literature having made them Anglophiles.

"The future," Palfrey said, but not as a toast; he was giving a name to a vague feeling of fear and discontent they all shared. "And when shall we four meet again? Who knows but what two months from now I may not be chief librarian at an Information Centre in Malaya, or turning up mysteriously on the docks at Penang Prabang with an attaché-case and the constipated look of a young man stuffed with top secrets."

"We all hope you will be happy in public service, Sam. You have the good fortune, after all, to be entering a department of government that puts tradition before efficiency."

"Father says that State Department will do little for my virtue, but that there is no more comfortable way to live abroad than at taxpayers' expense." Sam

Palfrey's voice was deep and mournful. "Mother fears I shall be involved in scandal, but I think she was reassured when I insisted that I shall take a beautiful Eurasian for mistress and not the second secretary of the legation."

"Your mother expresses the fears of all of us, Sam. Now that our soi<sup>t</sup> is back in power, scandal does seem inevitable."

"We do seem to have that wonderful ability to amuse the masses during times of distress and national failure. Our motto is: The sideshow is more important than the main event."

"What *is* the main event?"

"We never know," Evans said. "We never know." And he drained his glass, placing it with what he hoped was symbolical emptiness on the bar.

They left that place and then walked disconsolately to the railroad station, unwilling to admit to themselves that it was for the last time.

The silence was a block long. Then Palgrave spoke: "Father has taken out a subscription to *Fortune* for me. It appears to be a magazine for intellectual business-men. They sent me notice of the gift in an artfully designed, sealed envelope. There was an article on company wives. I wrote Father a letter about it in a tone of high moral outrage."

• • "What did he say, Palgrave?" They liked his name; it gave every conversation tone.

"He said I couldn't possibly have read it."

"Had you?"

"No.":

They took seats in the club car and drank Scotch whisky all the way to New York. There were some other boys from their class, but they were singing school songs with the girls from Radcliffe, and Evans and his friends pretended not to know them. Evans noticed that Sarah Hennaberry, whom he had met at a Christmas dance in Pittsburgh, was among them. She smiled a greeting to him, but out of loyalty to his friends he did no more than nod.

At Grand Central they separated, declaring devotion, promising to write from East Orange, Kuala Lumpur, and other less exotic places. They were especially worried about Sam Palfrey and advised him that going into the State Department was no reason for getting himself involved in politics.

"Stay clear of that," Palgrave said.

"Let come what may come," Palfrey answered, and walked directly through a door clearly marked *Ladies*.

They waited a moment longer, but when he did not come out they said their last goodbyes, and Evans ran for his train. He had ten minutes, but was certain his car would be a mile away at the very head of the train. It was. His suitcase had become very heavy by the time he got there. Sarah Hennaberry waved to him from the window of her room, and this time he smiled.

She had the compartment next to his. "Hullo, Evans," she said, in her husky Radcliffe way. "Park

your luggage and come visit. We could discuss transcendentalism, if you like."

Evans bowed with the gallantry he had only when drunk. "It was my special field of enquiry," he said, always one to use an archaic word where none would do.

She helped him put his suitcase on the rack.

## 2

H<sup>r</sup> woke early and, having a young man's hardness, had neither headache nor regrets. He put his hands under his head and whistled the remarkable melody from *La Almor Brujo*. It troubled him that any piece of modern music should have a melody. Coming of age, he was hagridden with such suspicions as. *Schoenberg might not be all!*

The splintered coal towns flashed past the compartment's streaked window. He reflected that in only twelve hours he had travelled the route it had taken two generations to cross, for his grandfather had arrived from Wales in the port of Boston, worked in these mines he was now passing, and soon he would be in Scwickley, in the vast mansion his father had built.

Sarah Hennaherry rapped on the other side of the wall behind his head. He answered with three knocks, signifying *I am alive.*

Oh, it's a long way from the dark-but-clean cottage in Wales, he thought, dressing himself.

His suitcase was still in Sarah's compartment and he put on yesterday's underwear without a qualm, for the young are always clean.

He went to Sarah's room when he was dressed and washed, took down his suitcase and found his toothbrush. Sarah, in a simple back- and sleeveless gingham dress, sat on the rumpled bed and watched him brush his teeth.

"Here, let me," she said when he had finished. She took the toothbrush and packed it for him, wrapping it in a piece of tissue paper, to show what a woman she was.

He smiled, appreciative of her skills. "Admirable," he whispered, "admirable."

"Underneath it all, Evans, you have a hard core of sweetness."

"Underneath all what?"

"Why can't you just smile knowingly and accept it, Evans, as any decent young man would in your place? Why in hell do you want to go around taking the cryptic out of everything?"

"All right. No need to be surly."

"Hell, Evans," she apologized, her voice terribly husky and sad. "It's just that old *post* and *tristus* feeling."

"It sounds like a firm of accountants," he said sadly. The hour—it was six-thirty in the morning—and the conversation made him feel wan. He sat down wanly in a chair covered in that bristly fabric railroads so admire.

They smoked cigarettes, not speaking, filling the small room with smoke, until the train began to slow for the stop and the cheerful suburbs gave way to the

slumps that looked as though they had been cried over for centuries.

"Don't feel bad, Sarah," he said to cheer her. "Before you know it, it will be September again and you can leave home for another year at school."

"Oh, Evans," she said, close to tears, "vacations are the worst of all."

He sat down beside her on the bed and took her in his arms, comforting her. "Still, it's better than no vacation at all. It means that it will one day be over and there's something *real* to go back to. I won't be having any more vacations. Last summer was the last for me."

"Poor Evans. Before you know it you'll be taking the children to the mountains and 'No' for an answer from your complacent wife."

He did not deny it. He faced his tragic middle age with the same seventeenth-century stoicism that he had for his dry old age and the death that would unjoint him.

"Home is all right for a little while. It's always so well dusted," Evans said.

Sarah dried her tears. She had to admit that was true. Evans went back to his bristly chair when the porter knocked and came in for their suitcases.

At the entrance of the drab station they said good-bye. "Phone me some time, Evans." Her voice was very deep after the tears. "You'll find it under Inland Coal Corp. The home phone."

Evans watched her as she walked off behind her

father's chauffeur, then turned and followed his to the long black car that glistened in the sun. It glistened, he thought, in a sombre, dark way; the car was English and English cars are never shiny.

Everything his father bought, from his underwear out, was English. It was the result of a trip to the home country he had made as a youth; the life and manner of the country squire had convinced him that this was indeed civilization, and everything else a more or less inexact copy.

When the car pulled up at the house, which was his father's memory of a Scottish castle recollected in Pittsburgh years later, Evans saw the old man pacing on the stone steps, switching his unpolished boots with an artificially aged riding crop. He wore a red flannel waistcoat and a very dirty knee-length raincoat with the belt unfastened and trailing at his sides.

"There you are," his father said, "there you are, boy."

They shook hands and stood together on the enormous stone platform which was the top step. Evans surveyed the rolling, terribly green lawn. Where the moat should be, he thought. "The grounds are looking awfully well, sir," he said, humouring his father, and wishing he dared to add something about watching out for the poachers. But he was never sure just how far his father was willing to go, whether he was merely harmlessly Anglophilic or quite, quite mad.

"Well, and how are things up at Harvard, Evans?"

he asked, squeezing his son's arm with a manly grip.

"All finished there, Father, you know. Graduated."

"Dear boy, I know very well you've finished there."

"When you did not come to the graduation exercises, I thought it might be that you had forgotten."

"No, no." He slapped his boot with the prematurely aged crop. "Of course, if your mother had been alive I'd have brought her up for the thing. But it's no good a man's being sentimental, what, boy?"

"Quite right, Father. Commencement was a dull affair in any case."

"I should jolly well hope so, Evans. Education has deteriorated quite enough without making the ~~ceremonies~~ exciting. I should like to know where we would be if *that* ever happened."

Mr. Howells led his son to the small dining-room. At the buffet a butler uncovered the dishes and they made their selection. His father chose kippers, but Evans had two fried eggs.

After his second cup of tea, Mr. Howells brushed his moustache with the side of his hand and lit a cigar. Leaning back in his chair in Edwardian ease, he blew grey smoke into the beams of sunlight that flooded the east windows.

• "Well, Evans, have you been thinking about what you're going to do now that you're down from Harvard?"

"I have only just got here, Father."

• "I wish you wouldn't talk like a heroine in a book by what's-her-name, Evans."

He meant Jane Austen, Evans thought, 'and was shocked into silence. He never knew that his father had read a book. It was probably what he did alone in his room at night, not wanting to set a bad example for his son.

"I have been giving it some thought, Evans," his father announced, pausing to relight his cigar. "I have given it considerable thought. Your brother Harry is in law and your brother Arthur is a major in the Air Force. Now, I asked myself; where could we put Evans that would be of most use to the family? The answer -don't you see it, boy?—is so obvious as to seem foreordained: *politics*, dear boy. You shall go into *politics*."

"But, Father," Evans cried, "I have too much character for that!"

"Your mother wanted you to go into the clergy, but there's no future in that field," Mr. Howells said, ignoring for the moment Evans' cry. "Politics is the best place these days for keeping one's hand on the wheel and bringing influence to bear. Besides, you should, of course, have to go into the Protestant clergy and no one seems to trust them any more; they've become more political than the politicians."

"I have no leanings toward the clergy, either," Evans said. "I thought I might rest for a few months and then write a thin nineteen-twentyish novel about adultery in the suburbs."

"I trust you will not bring it out under your own name. You might write a good one and it would

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damage your reputation in any field you chose for the rest of your life."

"You are quite right about that, Father," Evans said, without the air of surprise that usually attaches to such a statement. "I had planned to bring it out under a pseudonym, some violently Southern name to ensure a respectful reading."

"It is clear you will do well in politics, boy. I was not mistaken. As to character: it was precisely because of your character that I consider you to be so well fitted. We Tories have always preferred character to brains."

"There seems to have been a terrible falling off of both those qualities within our party, Father."

"Yes, yes," Mr. Howells sighed. "Twenty years of inaction. We've atrophied, boy. What's needed is young blood. Young blood. Starry-eyed materialists. Uncorruptible know-nothings. That's what's needed."

Evans was silent.

"Look here, my boy. I've arranged for you to be secretary to Congressman Haverford. He is my Congressman. He hasn't much longer to go, and when he has departed from the arena you can step in. You'll have had years of invaluable experience by then. You will have learned all the parliamentary dodges and the first name of every reporter and lobbyist in Washington. My boy, you would be able to run on a platform of *Youth and Experience*."

"I don't know what to say, Father. It does sound

like an unbeatable combination. Youth and Experience. It is of course the heart's desire of all of us."

"Good! That's settled then. Spend next week here, have yourself a good rest, recuperate from the rigours of the academy, and on the Monday you'll be off for Washington and a life of glorious service."

Mr. Howells rose and went to the sideboard, returning to the table with a bottle of brandy. He poured two small glasses and, raising his to Evans, said, "Herc's to the past."

He sat down and the smile of satisfaction slowly faded from his face. "Pity you'll miss the dog show," he said.

IN the bright summer sunlight, Washington affronted his eyes; it blared out its white federalism in marble columns and pilasters, and flung out a challenge to the birds which had obviously been readily accepted. When he stepped out of the ~~glow~~ the railroad station he shielded his eyes with his hand like a traveller on the prairies, and sang *Shenandoah* as he followed his porter's broad back to the taxis that waited with what seemed to him a peculiarly Southern indolence: they leaned toward the kerb to make the passenger's entrance easier. *Oh Shenandoah, I love your daughter,* he sang, full of Scotch whisky and Jeffersonian principles. He even pronounced it *Shenry-dore*, having decided that now he was in politics he was going to be homespun.

He gave the driver an address on a street whose name was merely a letter. It embarrassed him a little, like asking a waiter for a Bloody Mary. He wished the city fathers had not been in such haste and had given the streets full names; as it was, it gave the impression of temporariness, which is nothing a capital city should have.

The room on J Street had been taken for him by Congressman Haverford's wife, who was apparently prepared to treat him like a favourite nephew. Evans was pleased at sight of the house. Probably in reaction to the rigid architecture of the Government buildings, the rooming-house sagged gracefully and spread itself with a rich planlessness.

As he stepped on to the porch the door opened and Mrs. Rambler, the landlady, welcomed him in with almost masculine gallantry, a quality often achieved by Southern ladies in their late middle age. "Step in to my parlour, Mr. Howells, and we will take care of a few trifling formalities."

What she wanted was the rent, a month in advance; but she exacted it with such grace that when she handed Evans the receipt he felt he had received a gift of quite special quality, something he had always wanted.

"Mrs. Haverford came and inspected your rooms in person," she said, heaving her wide body up the stairs; he followed behind, struggling with his suitcases. "A charming lady, absolutely charming. She sat on the edge of the bed and bounced it a little just like she's been living in furnished room all her life, which I know she hasn't, because I read in Drew Pearson's where she comes from one of Pennsylvania's first-families."

It was a well-lighted room; one wall of it was almost entirely taken up with three wide windows. He noticed happily the fake, wide-topped French

Provincial desk and promised himself he would spend the quiet evenings there, writing his sparkling novels. He thought of Disraeli and regretted there were no more canals to be built. But perhaps he could think of one. He would buy an atlas first thing.

"You'll find your fellow roomers to be very friendly," Mrs. Rambler assured him. "You are all linked by a common bond: every person in this house is in Government. Even I, during the time of the recent war, was in the service; I worked in the Lost and Found Department at the Pentagon."

"That must have been interesting work, Mrs. Rambler. Right in the thick of things, as it were."

Mrs. Rambler agreed. "Oh, sir, there were days, such as the time I recovered a lost swagger-stick for a general who must forever be nameless, that I felt like Mollie Pitcher."

"Who would not?" Evans demanded.

Mrs. Rambler was silent, a look of demented reminiscence in her eyes, thinking of her days of glory, the war years when every woman under fifty-five is young. She thought of Corporal MacClellan, the dashing typist from Section Four, who waited for her in his highly-polished "jump" boots every evening at 5.30; until he was discharged and returned to his terrible wife, who would not give him a divorce, in Wausau, Wisconsin.

Evans unsnapped his suitcase and broke the spell. Mrs. Rambler sighed. She reached into her apron pocket for a handkerchief and found the envelope. "I

clear forgot, Mr. Howells." She gave him the crumpled letter. "Mrs. Haverford left this note for you. It's an invitation for dinner to-night at their house in Georgetown. A charming place. I saw colour photos of it in a ladies' magazine. It is said to be haunted by the ghost of Dolly Madison or somebody like that. Maybe it was the Burr girl. At any rate, it is rich with history, as the magazine writer said. Mrs. Haverford's favourite recipe is Barbecued Spare-ribs."

Ah yes, Evans thought; she is being homespun too. The clever woman.

When Evans began to unbutton his shirt, Mrs. ~~Ramaker~~ reluctantly withdrew, fearing she did not know the boy well enough to stay. She told him he must feel free to stop into her little parlour any time; there was always a drop of cheer to be had.

Evans bathed in a high, ancient bathtub that was fluted and curled like Cleopatra's barge; the water was tepid and slightly rusty, but he did not mind. He saw himself on the senate floor, his arm raised in the oratorical gesture of late Roman sculpture. A white-maned senator with a string tie whispered audibly, "Here is a brilliant young man; he is another Burke." He got out of the tub, and wrapped himself in a white towel, draping it about himself like a toga. Looking at his face in the mirror, he decided he would rather have his hair than be an elder statesman.

He planned to spend mid-afternoon in an air-conditioned movie and late afternoon in an air-conditioned bar. He hoped he would be able to find

some dim, congenial place where the bartender would remember his name and drink. It was the first thing to do when one arrived in a strange city.

His plans were interrupted by the arrival of Miss Ann Derringer, a young lady who lived in the next room. She had a vast crop of honey-coloured hair that in the dim corridor made her look like a torch someone had left at the door to light his way.

"Welcome to the House of Usher," she said, smiling kindly on him.

He stood back from the door and she entered.

"I heard you bathing, and, knowing these rooms had been vacant for two weeks, realized my new neighbour had arrived." She spoke with that slight Southern accent characterless Northerners acquire after a year in Washington. It is a kind of protective colouration they absorb, apparently feeling that false roots are better than no roots at all.

"I'm sorry I cannot offer you a drink," Evans said, having already acquired a knowledge of what was expected of him, socially, in Washington.

"We'll soon take care of that," she said maternally, and, going to her room, she returned with a bottle and two glasses. He heard her clinking cheerfully down the corridor like an ancient Chinese princess.

"Here we are, honey. All cheer."

"Bravo!" he said, taking her at her word.

She stopped smiling. "Good heavens! You know, when I first saw you I was sure you were down here to join the F.B.I. I mean, you look so well-washed,

your hair is combed so neatly; you have their look of youthful infallibility. But now that you've said. 'Bravo'—well, you obviously can't be here for the F.B.I. But don't tell me now. I want to guess." She studied him carefully; her gaze was searching. "You're an intellectual—only eggheads say things like 'Bravo' in this day and age—and you've got a job here with the Government—so you must be either a physicist or an economist. They're the only brainy people around. Anyway, you're too clear-cut to be a physicist, so you must be an economist. I suppose you could be a physicist—but no, they'll have such a hang-dog look. You're an economist. Am I right?"

"Wrong," he said, handing her a glass of whisky. "I am secretary to Congressman Haverford."

She raised her eyebrows. "Well, better, and better, honey. You can really go places there. He's on Mugonnigle's Committee."

"Oh? Which Committee is that?" And when she looked startled he explained that he had been cut off from the main stream of things for the past four years.

"Been sick, huh? This'll fix you up, honey. Drink hearty." She downed her drink with what Evans considered admirable skill.

"Socko!" she said. (Later, Evans discovered that Miss Derringer was a graduate of Bennington, a fact that for good and obvious reasons she was keeping secret.)

"You know, neighbour, you could fix up this room real nice." She looked around, nodding, giving it the

measuring look of the amateur interior decorator. "Last chap wasn't here long enough to do much with it."

"What happened to him?"

"Fired." She snapped her fingers. "Security risk."

"Stealing documents, I suppose?" Evans enquired in his old-fashioned way.

"You *must* have been sick," Miss Dertinger said with what Evans considered an excessive solitude. "I'll try to explain it to you, honey. Did you ever go to college?" she asked hesitantly, as one would ask after the health of one's neighbour if one were living in a plague town.

"Ye-es," he admitted suspiciously.

"Well, that'll make you suspect right off, honey. Just don't let them catch you thinking!" She paused a moment to impress him with the importance of this advice. "What college you go to?"

"Harvard."

She pursed her lips. "Honey, maybe you ought just better forget about fixing up this little old room. This last chap who had it wasn't a college man himself, but he had a second cousin at Chicamauga State Teachers' College who was President of the Hegel Club. Let me tell *you* something, honey—he was dropped fast. And he wasn't even a hold-over from the last administration!"

Evans sat down in an unmodernized Morris chair. "I feel like a hold-over from the Grover Cleveland administration," he said.

Ann Derringer arranged herself on the arm of the chair and smoothed back his dark hair. "You know, you're one lucky boy to have met me. I know my way around this town. You need a guardian. Now the first-thing you have to do is write a Definition of Communism. Better still, write a Definition of Americanism—nobody's done that yet. Then your Congressman can circulate it around the Hill. That's enough for a start. Sometimes its enough for an entire career."

She put her head on his shoulder. "If only you hadn't gone to Harvard," she lamented. "Still," she said, her face brightening, "it's better than Yale. The last State Department was nearly all Yale, you know."

"Evans poured another drink without dislodging her head from its place on his shoulder. He brushed her forehead with his lips and asked, "Is it true, Miss Derringer, that in this city there is a frightful imbalance of the sexes—ten women to every man or something like that?"

"It's the most god-awful imbalance you've ever seen," Miss Derringer said, and slid off the arm of the chair to his lap.

## 4

THE Haverford home in Georgetown was, like the other houses along the street, an elegant brick box. All the gardens blossomed richly, attesting to the impassioned efforts of club-women married to busy men. Standing on the narrow brick steps he pulled the bell-handle and heard, just the other side of the door, the flat ring of an antique bell.

Turning from the door, he noticed that the street lights were replicas of old gas lamps. It made him feel like poor Oliver Twist. This was, he admitted to himself, a rather strenuous imaginative exercise. The door was opened by a maid in regulation dress; he had been led to expect more, but secretly had resisted it. He was shown in—the foyer was two short steps in length—to a square living-room that Mrs. Haverford accurately described as *cosy*. French doors, as in second-rate plays, gave on to a tiny terrace where a white iron table that seemed to be made of lace sat alone and in a kind of splendour the rest of the house lacked. The furniture, American antiques, was held together by a gleaming coat of bee's-wax and a uniform failure of taste. It seemed to Evans a mass of knots and pineapples.

The Congressman, with a folded newspaper in his hand, rose to greet Evans. Mr. Haverford was a small man with a pink face. If he had ever had any distinguishing physical characteristics, he had managed to remove them by sheer force of will; he believed that safety and success lay in mediocrity. Haverford had the look of a man of whom it is said that he has never done a day's work in his life. And, indeed, Congressman Haverford had not. He was also the kind of man of whom his friends say: "Well, he's nobody's fool." By this they mean that while it's true he's an ass and incredibly stupid, he is yet somehow endowed with a certain shrewdness, a quality usually assigned to unlettered peasants.

"Welcome to your Nation's Capital, Evans. Welcome." These were Haverford's first words, and such was the man's lack of refinement that he failed to smile, Evans was quick to notice, while uttering them.

"Your charming city . . ." Evans mumbled, something he had with practice learned to do.

"And may I present my wife, the power behind the throne in a manner of speaking?"

Mrs. Haverford, too realistic to deny what was so obviously true, merely extended her hand and smiled on Evans. She hoped that he had found his room satisfactory? He could not thank her enough.

"Trust Margaret," the Congressman said. He always chose the easier path.

Mrs. Haverford, though only in her late thirties, practised the settled splendour of a matron. Evans

tried to imagine her bouncing on his bed in Mrs. Rambler's house, but could not. Margaret Haverford had dark brown hair that she wore to her shoulders, just as she had twenty years ago at Bryn Mawr; and when she rose and walked to the dining-room it was with the long, loose-legged stride of a girl leading the procession on Greek Games Day. Margaret was what other women called handsome, when they were being generous. Evans, who had a boy's admiration for big women, only thought that he would like to wrestle with her. And he defeated. He saw himself being carried off on her shoulder; he smiled as he watched his unavailing struggle.

• They served a sea-food dinner. Evans was not surprised. He had long noticed that inlanders had a peculiar snobbery about sea-food. To be knowing about fish is, with them, a sign of status

From the dining-room windows they could see into the garden of the house next door. There, two men were illuminated by the light of the fire in a barbecue pit.

"Wonder what they're cooking up now," the Congressman muttered.

"Those are the Aintrey brothers," Mrs. Haverford explained to Evans.

"Oh yes, the twins. I read their column yesterday. It left me with a mental picture of them, dressed in Edwardian clothes, walking briskly down Pennsylvania Avenue, talking to each other in code."

"They are dangerous men, Evans," Haverford

counselled. "They have revealed more State secrets in their columns than the whole Conspiracy combined. Why, they were the first to report *facts* about The Bomb!"

"I can't bear them," Margaret Haverford said. "I understand they come from a good enough Boston family—of course, New England isn't what it was; indeed, I do not see how it could ever have *been* what it was—but those two boys, Larned and Procter Aintrey, have associated themselves with the Worst Elements. They have consistently criticized John's Committee . . ."

John snorted over his shrimp.

". . . they are constantly harping on this *due process* business, which is just some New Deal Nonsense they've picked up somewhere. . ."

"Oh I don't object to due process. As a matter of fact, I believe I am on record as being in favour of it," Haverford said, and he leaned forward to impress this on Evans, "*as long as it's used wisely*. But it's gotten so that every spy, clergyman, and professor thinks it's his *right*. I have always maintained that democracy is indivisible, but you have to be pretty damn' careful who you're going to share it with."

Evans refilled Margaret's wine glass, and his own. He did this many times during the course of the meal in a vain attempt to build a solid wall between himself and the Congressman's oppressive stupidity. During coffee, which was ground fresh in their own kitchen from choice coffee beans, the phone rang in the depths

of the cosy house. John Haverford reached behind him and picked it up.

"Haverford speaking," he said, and then, recognizing the voice as that of an underling, he grunted and became monosyllabic. Putting down the phone, he announced that it was to be regretted, but duty called. He made a dull comparison between Congressmen and doctors—the only kind that can, when all's said and done, be made—looked at his watch three times, and hustled out. At the door he called back to his wife, "We've got one. Springer says he's an old one, but he came in under the wire."

"He has a truly Aristotelian sense of duty," Margaret said to Evans, "if you understand what I mean."

He assured her that he did. "It was my special field of enquiry," he said. "May I ask what it is that got in under the wire?"

"It's really too bad. I'd rather none had turned up than only one. You have no doubt read that The Committee has offered an amnesty to all Liberals and Reds who come in and confess their past errors before midnight tonight. So far, not one has had the courage to give himself up; and The Committee has had printed fifty thousand certificates for these people to sign. It's really too bad. The Committee members have been keeping a vigil at the offices round the clock for the past two weeks."

"Yes; I seem to recall having seen a picture in the papers of a Liberty Torch they have kept burning in their window." Evans had begun to read the

papers since his arrival in Washington. He found them interesting, but wondered whether that might not be due to their newness.

"The Liberty Torch was a gift of the children of Mississippi, who contributed their pennies."

"How admirable."

"Let us hope that this person who turned himself in to-night will be but the first. Perhaps, when others see it, they will follow suit." She rose from the table. "Shall we go into the garden, Evans? I'd like you to see my rose bushes. They were grown from slips that came from Williamsburg and are said to be seventeenth century in origin."

"I find the notion of seventeenth-century roses enormously appealing, Mrs. Haverford. That century is of special interest to me, you know."

"Don't ever give it up, Evans. You will find that as you grow older the need for a hobby becomes ever more pressing."

Evans found this a sobering thought. He admitted to himself the possibility that the brain would be the last organ to stop functioning. When the last love affair had ended, one might be left with nothing but *thought*. No wonder old men have that haunted look: it is not caused only by the memory of what they have done, but probably even more by the thought of what they can no longer do. The idea depressed him; and the odour of flowers, fragrant and funeral in the dark garden, caused a wave of melancholy to sweep over him.

Under the moonlight, in the shadow of a tree,

his face was pre-Raphaelite. Mrs. Haverford, who once had girlish dreams of a pure love with a pure poet, was touched with longing. She wanted to take his hand, she wanted to help him; but she knew this was not the place for that kind of love, nor was she any longer that kind of woman. Innocence was a weakness she had always to guard against.

After they had examined the perfect roses they sat on a white iron bench beside the shrubbery that separated the Haverford from the Aintrey garden. The flickering reflection of the fire in the barbecue pit was visible through the leaves and, in the quiet suburban night, they could hear clearly the voices of the Aintrey twins.

The twins were burning a year's accumulation of private papers in the barbecue pit. Indeed, that was why they had had it built.

"Here are what seem to be notes from what was one of my favourite columns. It was the interview with heroic General de Tassy du Pin, the defender of that outpost whose name we've all tragically forgotten."

"Was he not," his twin asked, "was he not the one who retreated all the way to that charming Hanoi suburb where our great good friend Princess Bo Si Jived?"

"Yes, Procter, he did; but let us not lose sight of the fact that in so doing he taught Ho a resounding lesson in guerrilla warfare."

"Is it a good idea, Larned, to teach one's enemies lessons in warfare?"

"It is, of course, a very bad idea, Proc; but it is a kind of chivalry one cannot help but admire. I think it exists nowhere so much as among that remarkable group of officers, French and British, who are—with what remarkable dash and courage!—losing one colony after another to the people who happen to be living in them."

The voices of the Aintreys drifted, languorous and vaguely cultured, on the soft air. "The air seems to have made me drunk, Mrs. Haverford," Evans whispered, his head sagging toward her shoulder.

"Dearest boy," she murmured, accepting the burden of his head in a motherly way and stroking his hair.

"What is the other paper you have there, Larned? I seem to recognize my researcher's handwriting."

"It seems to be what we newsmen call *background material*. Yes, it seems to be notes on the life of Dr. Lucius Bentheim, the renowned physicist."

"That was *my* column, Larned. I recall it was written while you were in West Germany inspecting our defences."

"I found them wanting."

"Dr. Bentheim was one of those scientists who was hesitant about building the H-bomb. Of course, like all the others, he went right ahead and built it. I characterized this hesitancy . . ."

" . . . as *moral fuzziness*. I recall it very well, Proc. Adenauer quoted it with approval during my interview with him. I believe he was under the impression I had written it."

"A lot of the newspaper fellows picked it up. As a phrase, it seems to have caught on."

"It has a classic quality, Procter, a kind of grand simplicity. It sums up what I like to call *the moral climate of our time.*"

"That's awfully good, Larned. Can't we get it into tomorrow's column?"

"Oh, for the matter of that, as long as we're writing from Washington we can 'get it into *any* day's picce. Just dump that box, Proc. No point going through it. It's that background material on deviates in the Agriculture Department's Wildlife and Fisheries Section. We shall never be able to use it."

The flames consumed long lists of unhappy names and illuminated the flowers in the Haverford garden. Evans, his eyes closed, his head in Margaret's lap, saw the red glow under his eyelids.

"It would seem to be a *veritable holocaust,*" Evans said, "as we newspapermen say."

Margaret bent down and kissed his lips. "You even taste sweet. It's because you're young and untired."

He felt, as a matter of fact, extremely tired. It had been a full day. He wished Margaret would pick him up and carry him into the house. In his ears droned the voice of Larned Aintrey, something about a ring of deviates in the Oregon hatcheries . . . and as Evans fell asleep the voice was speaking of Teddy Roosevelt, longing for the brand of bluff heartiness that was required to cleanse this cesspool.

Margaret, not knowing Evans was asleep, spoke of

her wasted life; she counted as lost those years since her graduation from Bryn Mawr. "I had to make myself over into the very model of the Congressman's wife. Actually, I am wicked and have evil proclivities which, with the exception of several affairs with altogether *nice* men, I have managed to curb. It took undreamed of moral strength and, were it not for Reverend Peter Minton Paul and his inspirational books, I doubt I could have achieved this serenity." She stroked his hair languidly to show how serene she was. "Have you read his *Straight Thinking, The Sure-fire Way to God and Serenity?*, I am now reading his new book, which was this month's selection for all three of the book clubs I belong to. If you would like to read it, I'd be pleased to offer you one of my copies."

The lights snapped on in the living-room. Her husband had returned. She heaved a great sigh, and Evans woke, refreshed. "John's back," she said.

They entered the living-room through the French windows. Passing the iron table on the terrace, Evans pressed his hand against it, feeling its hard coldness.

John Havertford sat in a small, only slightly overstuffed chair. The red marks on his glasses were on his nose and he slumped with fatigue.

"Some old man. Crazy," he muttered.

"What? What happened, John? Were the television people there?"

"It was just some old man, . bout ninety years old. He heard about the amnesty and wanted to turn'

himself in. He had been a friend of Samuel Gompers."

"Oh. Did you give him a certificate?"

"The vote was unanimous to withhold it. It looked pretty fishy to me. I wouldn't be surprised if it all turned out to be a stunt. *Never underestimate the opposition!* They had to have learned *something* in twenty years in power!"

"Did you extinguish the torch?" Evans asked, feeling that he ought to show some interest.

"Yes; Springer<sup>1</sup> poured water on it, the fool; it made a lot of smoke. The Army sent a bugler over to blow taps, but Mugonagle threw him out. Things will never be right between him and the Army. I sometimes think the Army has bitten off more than it can chew."

Mrs. Haverford rummaged in a narrow bookcase while the congressman and Evans had a nightcap. When Evans had made arrangements for *reporting to duty*, as they laughingly called it, Margaret showed him to the door. She kissed him lingeringly in the foyer and as he stepped out of the door she handed him the book.

Under the Dickensian lamp post he read the title: *Through Thick and Thin: Our Lord's Way to the Moral Life.*

## 5

THE furniture of Congressman Haverford's office, like the furniture of his mind, bespoile another era. All his office lacked was gas chandeliers and brass spittoons. His desk was massive and rested on claws that, for some reason, held a solid glass ball in each taloned grip. There was a great couch and easy-chair of leather—black leather that was pleated and puffed and in general treated with that careless disdain of the inherent qualities of materials that was a characteristic of *art nouveau*. Or so Evans decided, regarding it thoughtfully on his arrival the first morning.

Asleep on the sofa was Arch Springer, that young-old man who was later to achieve such notoriety during the investigation of the Artificial Ice lobby. Springer was wearing an Oxford (as it is called) black suit with a brocade waistcoat in which the colour orange predominated. Evans' first impression was that he was some eighteenth-century ghost who had missed first cockcrow.

Springer stirred slowly to wakefulness. His head rested on his right arm. He looked at Evans and inhaled deeply, a waking breath, assurance of life.

"It is quite awful that one's first breath should be rewarded by the horrid chemical odour of our horrid chemical clothing." He stood up and adjusted his jacket. "Not a wrinkle," he said, extending his arms to show Evans he spoke the truth. "But then, it has no character either. Often, on these unhappy occasions when I must spend the night in my clothes, I suspect that I shall wake to find them melted away, gone back to the test-tubes whence they came. And each morning as I put on these clothes that have not an animal or vegetable fibre in them I have the most depressing feeling. As though I've lived too long and wakened in another century. I feel I'm playing a role, in one of those frightening movies I used to see as a child, produced by Korda from some futuristic novel by H. G. Wells. *A Fabian Socialist, as we all know,*" Springer added in a loud voice, suddenly remembering where he was.

He shook hands with Evans. "Of course, I know you're Howells. Was expecting you. Met your father and your brother, the Major. Awfully intelligent man, the Major. Can't understand what he's doing in the Army. My father was an Army man and I grew up, as the sons of Army men will, with the sure knowledge that there was no life but a military life. But when I came of age I saw what should be obvious to all: in this country of ours the military has no future. You ask why. I will tell you. Armies are only for the poor countries of the world. We can afford to buy anything we want; we don't have to conquer it.

And after our recent experience in Asia, it is also quite apparent that it's *cheaper* to buy a country than to conquer it. Besides, there's all that wreckage. And who has to pay for cleaning it up and rebuilding? We do, of course. I hasten to point out that I have no *moral* objection to flattening a small Asian country. It does, however, seem to me to be unbusinesslike. Why, my dear fellow, we can buy any small West European country for what it cost us to level our ally, South Korea. How badly we all of us felt when we heard the news that there were no fit targets left standing for our Navy's big guns. But there you are; that's the fix they're in today. They've built themselves such awfully big guns and bombs that, you might say, they've invented themselves right out of the business of war. Time was, a little pineapple rebellion was always a paving proposition. But nowadays . . . I don't know, Howells. Nationally it becomes more and more difficult to make friends. All the other countries, if they do not hate us, treat us with suspicion and distrust. But then, I suppose, that is the price we must pay for world leadership. Except that we do not seem to be world leaders. Ah God, God, God! One must begin to think that wealth and power are qualities that have to be punished." He paused; he put his hand on his hip and threw his head back. "What is that odour? What is that odour?"

"Smoke," Howells said.

"Ah God! The Liberty Torch." And it he had been

given to such gestures, he would have smote his forehead. "There you are, Howells; there is another example of a first-rate idea that came to nothing. A *seeming* first-rate idea, I should say. It seemed so to us on the Committee. I am beginning to think we have perhaps misjudged the temper of the people." He let that phrase, the temper of the people, hover in the room for a moment. He savoured it and mentally cached it for later use.

Springer pressed his forehead with gentle delicate fingers. "A small headache. You will find that I do not approve of hangovers and, therefore, never have them." His face was unlined and of indeterminate years; only something about the eyes, the whites had gone dingy, indicated age. He was handsome in a curiously characterless way, the kind of face that would appeal to an expensive academic portraitist.

"I went to the celebration last night, as you might have guessed" he said to Howells in what was, for him, a modest and off-hand manner.

"What celebration was that?" Evans asked, hoping that his attempt at serious interest would more than make up for his hopeless ignorance.

"But, of course, you could hardly know. It was the second annual victory banquet of the Interim Committee for the Deportation of Charlie Chaplin, the I.C.D.C.C. as we call it here. I arrived late, of course, because of the business here." He indicated the sooty Liberty Torch on the window-sill. "Still, I was in time for the *festive* part of the evening, though I

missed the reading of congratulatory messages from the Attorney-General and the Let's Get Einstein Committee. The I.C.D.C.C. is a quite exclusive organization, and were it not for my good friend John Probber of the Artificial Ice office, I should never have been invited. The Artificial Ice Association, of course, provided all the ice cubes. It was quite a coup for John."

"I have no doubt."

"You have a very good voice. It has resonance, yet nothing pompous or oratorical about it. Not yet. I suppose it's your Welsh inheritance. You'd do well on TV. But you couldn't wear that white linen suit — a good *Old South* touch, by the way. But you can't wear white on TV. Pink, yes, not white. I'll speak to Hetty Fairweather, the producer of 'Meet Your Congressman's Secretary.' She needs a new face. Things have been rather static here the last few months; only five committee counsels have been fired. Time was when you could hardly turn on your set without seeing some ritter stranger; but lately it's been rather dull. And dangerous. I've warned Hetty that this youth forum sort of thing can't go on much longer. The kids ask much more intelligent questions than the Congressmen can possibly answer. Some of us suspect that The Conspiracy is planting youthful ringers in the audience."

"Could we not plant some ringers of our own?" Evans asked.

Springer paused to take a second, longer look at

Howells. He pursed his mouth in judgement. "You have an impressive mind, Howells."

As if he had been waiting for such a sign, Springer invited Evans into his office, a smaller chamber, but furnished in the manner of Haverford's. He took an electric coffee-maker from the bottom drawer of his desk and plugged it in, adding water from a carafe. "Two centuries. Has it been two centuries? Perhaps not quite. But all this time and we still live as if we're camping out." He pushed out his lips in distaste, leaned down to the open drawer of his desk and shouted, "Great strides. We've made great strides as a nation." He scrawled on his memo pad and pushed it across to Evans. *Hidden mike* was the message on the paper.

He closed the desk drawer and whispered to Evans, "Recorded conversations down here are full of pregnant pauses. One can almost see the eyes roaming the walls, looking for the tell-tale wire. Ah for the good old days when one had to rely only on gossip. I tell you, Evans, the tape-recorder has done more to destroy the art of conversation in Washington than TV."

The coffee began to bubble under its thick glass dome. Arch opened the drawer and took out two cups. "Vast strides," he shouted into the drawer, "vast strides, sir."

He poured the coffee with an elegance Evans had to admire. As he sipped, Arch Springer drew a printed form from the long drawer of his desk. "The

questionnaire for all new employees. Shall we get on with it?"

Evans smiled in anticipation. "By all means. I never feel so creative as when I am filling up a questionnaire. I hope it's a long one."

"Tolerably long, but unimaginative. Questions 1 to 20, from 'Your College?' to 'Have you ever lived in sin with a man (woman)?', we do not have to go into. Preliminary investigation has already provided us with the answers. I must say that your life to date has been so blameless as to arouse all sorts of suspicions, and I can only hope that Washington and its dismal climate will cause a little dry rot to set into your soul. It doesn't do down here to have too high a character. Like the hero of third-rate romantic novels, you have to have a past; but it must be quite pedestrian. We want no exoticism here. Indeed, my waistcoats have already been the subject of a long memorandum. But let's get on to the business at hand. Question 21: 'Do you read more than 12 books a year?' A *yes* answer does not, *in itself*, disqualify you for employment."

"I suppose that reading, like most habits, will be a hard one to break. May I say that in the coming year I will probably read more than 12 books, but hope to taper off gradually?"

"I'll put: 'More than 12, but with slackening interest.' How's that?"

"Admirable," Evans said, feeling at last in his element.

The questions and answers took nearly an hour to

complete, Evans being detained longest by a statement he had to write in his own hand on the subject of Motherhood in twenty-five words or less. He finished it with a quotation from Vergil, but Arch Springer deleted it, reminding Evans that Vergil was a South European.

As he opened the door from Springer's office to return to the ante-room, where he would wait for the Congressman, he saw a young woman adjusting the blinds. The slatted sun came in blindingly behind her and for a moment she seemed on fire about the edges. It was Maria Wojechowski, Haverford's stenographer. Evans bowed in his absurdly formal way; he found himself wishing he had a bouquet of flowers to present to her. Roses, he thought. She had that kind of beauty.

"How do you do?" Evans said.

"I am quite well," Maria said, "considering that debilitation of the spirit that Washington's summer produces in all of us."

"I am happy you recognize it as a moral problem, ma'm," Evans said in his Old World way.

"I can see," Maria said, "I can see already that we are going to be great friends."

## 6

MARIA was the niece of Stephan Wojechowski, who controlled the Polish vote in western Pennsylvania. Other members of her family as well had distinguished themselves in the political struggles of our time. It was her maiden aunt, Athalia, a woman of ripe years, who had contributed to the Committee black velvet hoods to be worn by Eastern political exiles who appeared before the TV cameras. She had embroidered them with gold threads and, the first and only time they were used, they created all sorts of electronic havoc. Though they were never used again, Aunt Athalia received a Liberty Certificate from the Committee and a personal letter from Congressman Mugognigle. Framed, these now hung in a place of honour over her fireplace, between the pictures of Generals MacArthur and Bor.

The Wojechowski's, after forty years in America, were materially richer and culturally poorer than when they left Poland. Maria's uncle spoke two languages, Polish-American and American-Polish. It was the end result of what sociologists call assimilation, a process that robs everyone without benefitting even

a few. Maria, on the other hand, spoke English well and Polish not at all; this is what is known as development or progress, the words we use when we are pleased with change.

Maria had dark brown hair which she wore long. Now, in the hot weather, she pulled it together in the back, caught in a wide gold band, and it hung down her back like the tail of a horse. Her figure too was rather more generous than that of the average American girl. It was an ampleness that Evans admired. Like most thin men, his idea of comfort was softness.

What a mating this would be, he thought, looking at her. My thin paleness and her dark passion. Our children would be giants! Evans believed in the theory of hybrid energy. He could find in science a rationale for every aberration, even love. He shared the view of most of his class that love is a dirty trick that society plays on us.

Maria went about the early morning tasks. She dusted her desk and put fresh water in the bud vase. Evans sat on the leather sofa, watching her discreetly, waiting for Haverford. At 10.30 the Congressman phoned to say that he would not be in ~~and~~ told Maria to welcome Mr. Howells when he arrived and introduce him to his job.

"Mr. Howells has been here since nine, Congressman."

This was a surprise to Haverford. Unperceptive man that he was, he had never observed that the

anxious children of the newly rich are always punctual. Often, it is the only characteristic they develop.

"The Congressman will not be in to-day, Mr. Howells," Maria announced when she had put down the phone. "He asks that I welcome you and introduce you to your daily routine."

"That would be very kind of you, although I think you have already welcomed me in a way the Congressman could never equal."

"How is that, Mr. Howells?"

"The fact of your beauty, Maria." Evans' innate shyness often made him brash.

Maria lowered her eyes in modesty. It was an old-fashioned gesture Evans had never seen before, and he was touched deeply by it. For some reason, it made him think of Edith Wharton. "I apologize if I have embarrassed you."

Maria raised her eyes. Evans thought: how wonderfully soft they are. Maria said, "Your first task each morning will be to read all the papers and cut out every article that mentions the Congressman's name. We keep a scrapbook."

She handed him a stack of newspapers. There were the Washington dailies and the Pittsburgh dailies. "I see," Evans said. "The battlefield and the home front."

. "The Congressman makes no pretence of being interested in *national* problems, except, of course, in so far as they affect Pittsburgh."

"How strange it is, Maria, that men so often find

that duty and survival are one and the same thing."

"And are they not?" Maria asked with an innocence that quite stopped him. "Now here," she said, "are the two magazines we subscribe to. You have to write a précis of all editorials and political articles appearing in these two publications, the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *American Legion Monthly*.

"That's getting both sides of things," Evans said, always delighted by the stupidity of others.

"Our Party has never spared itself in its search for truth, Mr. Howells. It is one of its notable qualities. It is only for the love of country that, on occasion, we stray from the path of truth."

"Oh, it's not that I don't believe in truth, Maria," Evans said, looking intensely at her face.

Maria looked down again and fidgeted with a corner of the American Legion magazine; its cover showed an Asian about to do something beastly. "Mr. Howells, I beg of you, this is an office, a place of work. Do not discomfit me."

"Do I discomfit you?" Evans asked, not even trying to keep a note of pride out of his voice. "Do I?"

"You do."

"It does give me a feeling of rare power, Maria."

"Oh, it's not that I mind being discomfited, in this way. But pray do not discomfit me in the office."

"I am not yet familiar with Washington."

"It is for that reason I excuse you."

"Therefore choose some other place where I may discomfit you. Perhaps tonight?"

"Unfortunately, I have already made plans for to-night. To-morrow night? I have a car."

"I would hope we could find something more comfortable, more convenient, than a car. I don't believe—though, understand me, I should like to—but I don't believe I could ever discomfit anyone in a car."

"Mr. Howells," Maria admonished, "such discomfiture as may take place can be done as readily in a car as in a restaurant."

"I see. Then there's someone else?"

"No. Not any more."

"I sec."

"Men always say *I see* when they are hurt," Maria said. "I have had little experience of men, but it was one of the first observations I made. Whenever they say *I see*, I turn my head away. I cannot bear the stricken look they get on their face."

"And have I that look, Maria?"

She turned. "Oh, my dear," she said, in sympathy, at sight of his face.

He took her in his arms and kissed her with a passionate intensity that did not surprise her at all. He kissed her eyelids. It was the first time anyone had ever done that to her. She said, "It had always been my impression, Mr. Howells, and now it is confirmed, that if an intellectual puts his mind to it, there is almost nothing he cannot do."

"Not *Mr. Howells*. *Evans*," he whispered, his lips touching her ear.

"It had always been my impression, Evans, and now

it is confirmed, that if an intellectual puts his mind to it, there is almost nothing he cannot do."

"How nice it is to have such a statement repeated in its entirety," he said, and would have continued, but the phone rang. It was Mrs. Haverford, for him; Maria handed him the phone with a neutral look on her face.

She only wanted to know how he was getting on; she knew how difficult first days could be, she said.

Miss Wojechowski has been very kind, he said.

Oh yes, Margaret said, and she hoped he would not be too busy to finish reading very soon the book she had lent him. She did want to spend an evening discussing it with him.

"I read the first chapter" this morning, Mrs. Haverford. He does have a *vigorous* style, doesn't he? Forthright, she said, groping for words to describe the distasteful thing.

"I'm so glad you like it, so relieved. One never knows about the men of your generation, too young for one war, just right for the next. It's so easy to be cynical and not-caring, so lazy-minded to reject a thinker like the Reverend Peter Minton Paul."

"I am sure I will find it a richly rewarding reading experience," he said, remembering the blurb on the jacket.

"I'm sure you will. He is such a fine writer and has a truly soaring mind. Did you read Beulah Partridge's review in the *Tribune*?"

"I'm afraid I did not."

"She called him 'the Albert Payson Terhune of

the Heavenly Host.' It was truly a rave review from first word to last."

"Beulah Partridge is more discriminating than she knows," Evans said.

"Well, do phone me, Evans, just as soon as you are done with it. Reverend Paul will be in town in a week or two for his annual sermon at the Non-sectarian Church of Christian Principles. I am hoping that you will accompany me."

"I should be delighted."

"Good. I think every movement should have a youth element in it. I consider it one of the weaknesses of our Party that it has not."

"I am sure there are some."

"Yes, I know, that is what they call themselves; but for some reason all *our* youth look so middle-aged. They haven't the *bounce* of those young people one always sees on picket lines."

"We all ought to get out more," Evans said.

"I'm sure you're right, Evans. Perhaps you'll join me on a nature walk some evening soon."

"I look forward to it, Mrs. Haverford."

The conversation drew to a close. Maria was seated at her typewriter, waiting for Evans to finish the call. As soon as he hung up she began typing. "Maria," he said, but she went on typing and finally he left the room, going in to Haverford's office where he read the newspapers and cut out all the accounts of the extinguishing of the Liberty Torch that mentioned Haverford's name.

Evans went to lunch with Springer. Seated at the next table were the Committee's two young legal experts, Burke and Hare. Evans recognized them from newspaper photos. They had been much in the papers lately, for they had been touring Information Centres all over Europe, ferreting out the works of men like Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Dreiser, and those other not quite American authors who gave the impression that the U.S.A. was a land of violence inhabited by people with an overwhelming sense of guilt. It was the feeling of Burke and Hare that this was not a true picture; they, for example, had never felt guilty about anything. And even if it were true, it was not something one ought to be telling to foreigners.

In the West Berlin Information Centre they had found three copies of a book by one Tom Paine and sent a wire to Mugonnigle to have him subpoenaed.

Evans and Arch Springer did not get back to the office till three o'clock. Maria was gone.

"Has she left for the day?" Evans asked.

"Very likely," Arch said. "Well, after all, she is entitled to some privileges." The door of Haverford's office was open. Springer pointed to the great black leather sofa and, smiling, said, "I have often tried to imagine it. I see it as a *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* kind of thing. But when I try to imagine *him*, all I can see is a big, pink, boiled lobster."

Evans closed his eyes. He felt a little sick. One could not, he found, be seventeenth-century about everything.

## 7

EVANS went to his room at Mrs. Rambler's house. The vision of Maria on the black leather sofa occupied his thoughts; he saw her being consumed by a voracious Haverford. Ah, well, I will get over it, he assured himself, being old enough already to have that much knowledge of time's drug-like powers.

His box of books had arrived that day. He poured himself a drink and sipped at it, as if it were some strength-giving medicine, while he struggled with the rope that held the box closed. He unpacked the books and filled two shelves of his bookcase. There were his volumes of seventeenth-century verse and drama, and a new translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. With these books on his shelf he felt more sure of himself; it was the equipment without which no young man worth his salt would set out on life's journey.

He stood at the bookcase, drink in hand, and read the marginal notes he had written in a handsomely bound copy of *The Duchess of Malfi*. College textbooks never lose their charm, it is because we can read our own immature responses, scrawled in the margins, from the vantage of a greater maturity. We may

never re-read the books, but year after year we go back to the margins.

He fixed himself a second drink, set the back of the unmodernized Morris chair at a 45-degree angle, and settled down with the Reverend Peter Minton Paul's vigorous and forthright book. He groaned as he opened it. He had not a spiritual bone in his body.

Pencil in hand, he found himself reading for the pleasure of making marginal comment. If the book was ever found among his effects, he wanted posterity to know that he had read it with tongue in cheek. He underlined passages of crashing clichés, thunderous platitudes, and soft-brained reasoning; and in the margins wrote his comments: *Ça, alors. Zut! Mon Dieu! Salaud! Faugh!* Was St. Paul a do-gooder? Who says that love is a Christian aim?

Love. He put down the book and leaned his head against the back of the chair, stared at the ceiling. Love. The thought of Maria with fat, pink Haverford sickened him. Is there someone else? he had asked her. And what had she said? Not any more. Was it ended, then, with her and the Congressman? Or was that merely an office relationship, a duty of her job that she did not count? He did not know. The corners of his mouth turned down like the mask of tragedy and he drained the glass with a cavalier twist of his arm.

He could read no more. He threw the book across the room. "Im-possible," he said, not sure what he meant by it.

There was a rapping on the wall, then footsteps in the hall. It was Ann Derringer. "Hey," she called before he got the door open, "what's going on in there?"

He opened the door and she smiled at him, her hair lighting up the dim hall. "You got that old first-week-in-Washington *malaise*, honey?"

He smiled. It was curious how the language of intellectuals got thrown in with her slangy Southern talk. He had noticed it before.

"No, sugar. It's more like that old Cambridge *Weltschmerz*," he said, always quick to copy the idiosyncrasies of others.

"This town, you know, was built on a swamp, and I sometimes think it's never quite been drained dry."

"Miasmic odours," he suggested. "Primal mist."

"Yes, indeedy," she agreed. "But look, honey, we're having a party tonight. How about you coming along? Get away from all this."

"Admirable idea, Ann. Who is giving it?"

"Oh, it's just an informal thing. Some of the kids from Lakes and Inland Rivers section got it up. We're going to drive down to this place in Virginia and have an outdoors kind of thing."

"Splendid. I think we shoul'd all get out more."

"You a Jeffersonian, honey?"

"I am," he said with pride.

"You want to watch out how you talk. You can be spotted in a minute shooting off your mouth that way."

"Can't I be Jeffersonian?" he asked, a little hurt.

"It's not a good idea, honey. I'm afraid we're in for a reappraisal of him that would agonize Jefferson."

"You may be right."

"Only the other day, Senator Afton Rivers of North Carolina told the Senate that it was *Jefferson* who wrote the Fifth Amendment. But you know how those North Carolinians are—they hate the Virginians!"

"I dare say we all know that," Evans said.

"Well, let's get going, Evans sugar. We don't want to be the last to arrive."

He could not bring himself to ask her why. "Can I go as I am?" He was wearing cotton cord trousers, a white polo shirt, and dirty white buckskin shoes.

"You better put on another pair of shoes. No point advertising you're a college man."

He sighed. "I never thought of it as a matter for pride, but neither have I yet been able to summon up what seems the necessary sense of shame."

When he took off his dirty shoes he felt like a man must feel who has sold his birthright. "I shall become dissolute," he said. "I am already unprincipled. And this is only my second day in Washington."

"As Plato said, corruption must be there, inside you, in order to come out, sugar."

"Is Plato all right?" he asked.

"Oh, sure. The party in power always likes Plato."

"But he's a South European," Evans reminded her.

"Honey," she said with admiration, "you are catching on fast."

He tied his shoes. "How are we going to get to this place in Virginia?"

A friend of hers, Tom Jarrett, was stopping for them in his car. His wife, she said, will be along. "She's a good sport, even though she is from Wildlife and Hatcheries Section."

"Rum crowd over there, I suppose," he said.

"Well, you know how they are. Conservationists, if they're any good at all, are all half mad. It's tough trying to conserve natural things in our country. We'd much rather just use it up. And it's a curious thing that it's the most conservative who are the most set against conservation."

"I'm sure that's only a *seeming* contradiction."

They had time for several drinks. The Jarretts were late. Evans and Ann Derringer sat on the lumpy sofa. He kissed her in a cool, detached way, as if he were an observer and not a participant.

"I do like your manner, Evans."

It was at this point the Jarretts finally arrived. Ann heard the car horn and buttoned her blouse; they finished their drinks and Ann ran downstairs. Evans had to go to her room to carry down a half-gallon thermos of punch. The Jarretts were a nice young couple, Washington born and bred, who sang their high school songs all the way to the picnic grove. Evans and Ann sat in back and drank out of paper cups—red and blue cups that bore the legend: *A Very Happy Birthday to You*. Miss Derringer had some difficulty getting out of the car when, finally, they arrived.

The picnic broke up unexpectedly early, before midnight. It was because of Ann. They had all been sitting around the fire singing their high school songs, when Ann insisted on doing *her* school song. She tried to stand up but, unable to quite make it sang from a kneeling position. The song was, apparently, called *I Am a Bennington Girl*; it was written to the tune of *I Love a Parade*.

When Ann finished there was no sound, neither the laughter nor the applause that Evans had expected. There was, indeed, a pall of silence.

The fire was carefully extinguished with water and earth by two guests from Wildlife and Hatcheries; hampers were packed, and the young people drifted slowly but purposefully to their cars.

Evans heard Mrs. Jarrett say, "Now remember, the only reason we're taking her back is because we brought her and we can't very well abandon her here. Besides, no formal charge has been made yet."

Tommy Jarrett was very nice. When they got back to Mrs. Ramblcr's, he helped Evans get Ann out of the car and said, "I hope everything will be all right."

"She'll be fine in the morning," Evans said, "A good night's sleep is all she needs."

"Well, I don't know," Jarrett said.

She left town a week later. The night before, she and Evans had a farewell party in her room. Evans bought a bottle of cointreau to mark it as a special occasion.

"Well, darling," she said, "it's the American Experience. I put it down to that. I feel like those young men who, lacking all conviction, joined up during the last war just because they didn't want to miss the big experience of their generation. I've now had the big experience of mine."

"What will you do now?"

"My old suite-mate at Bennington is breeding horses in Connecticut. She's invited me to help her."

"Well, that's not such a far cry from Lakes and Inland Rivers, after all."

"I never really cared about Lakes and Inland Rivers, Evans. It was the only accusation they made at the departmental trial that was altogether true."

"What else, beside hiding the fact you were a college graduate, did they bring up?"

"Too much non-fiction among my books. One of the judges said that non-fiction was especially bad for women, because it cultivated their already over-developed sense of realism."

"Shameful," Evans said. "It is well known that all non-fiction today is about Tibet, and everyone knows there isn't anything real about that."

"The second judge asked me, 'What do you understand by the term reality?' And I said, 'Reality is what you can touch.' Of course I see now how stupid that was. That finished me right then and there. It revealed me as being lacking in spiritual qualities."

"What did he say?" Evans asked, filling their glasses again. "The judge."

"He said, 'Yes, young woman, and 'what about the soul? What about the soul?''"

"Did he really? How too Salem-like of him."

"It was rather harrowing. I kept thinking of the pit and the pendulum."

"I shouldn't wonder," Evans said, but saw himself parrying the judges with witty thrusts.

Later Ann cried on his shoulder and after that, when the cointreau was all gone, she told him about her recurrent dream of Washington slowly sinking back into the swamp on which it was built.

"Listen," she said. "Late at night, when it is very still like this, you can sometimes hear it. A southing sound. Very gentle. Listen."

Evans listened. They sat very still.

He heard it then.

If she had drunk half the bottle, he; after all, had drunk the other half.

## 8

EVANS' work at the office quickly settled into a dull routine. He learned soon enough that regular hours were not expected of him and he took to staying in bed until eleven, writing his thin novel of adultery in the suburbs on a clipboard held against his knees. He did not want it to be a comedy, but he found it terribly difficult to write seriously of that situation. It was not altogether Evans' fault: his characters were steadfast in their refusal to take it seriously; they seemed to feel that adultery was something to be enjoyed. He found that their behaviour rather offended him, finally. It is the banal problem that all young writers have to face.

He came to the office around noon, at the time when all the lesser, clerical staff were leaving for lunch. Usually only Maria and Springer were there. He maintained a cool, office relationship with Maria, while she pretended to have forgotten that their relationship had ever been anything other.

A desk had been installed for him just outside the door of Haverford's office. Sitting in his claw-footed chair, he envisioned himself as a latter-day Lucien

Leuwen, seated at the Minister's door, having sharp Stendhalian insights. He read the Washington and Pittsburgh newspapers and, after a week, had so developed his eye that it was no longer necessary to read the papers, but merely to cast his eye on them. If Haverford's name was there, it leaped at him from the page.

On dull days he wrote his novel on House stationery. The notion appealed to him. It was the next best thing to having an official sponsor. It sometimes made him feel like a Renaissance man, but this he found an illusion difficult to maintain, since there was so little action in his life. And yet, he thought, except for dear Sam Palsrey, who is probably by now in Luang Prabang making love to a Taurasian, how much more at the centre of things I am than all my classmates.

The inter-office phone on his desk sounded, a dull anaemic death-rattle. It was Arch Springer calling from his office ten feet away.

"Evans, old man, do you recall my mentioning when first we met that I'd see about getting you on 'Meet Your Congressman's Secretary'?"

"But what *is* it, Arch, and what do they *do*?"

"It's a television programme and a panel asks you questions. The panel is made up of a housewife, a young attorney, a high school boy, and a businessman. I talked to the producer, my great friend Hetty Fairweather, and she says okay for two weeks from this Sunday."

"But I don't know anything, Arch."

"My dear fellow, I should hope that if you *did* you'd have sense enough not to say it. It's on at 10.30 in the morning. Alert your friends. I've already sent an announcement to the Pittsburgh papers."

Evans hung up. He was quite depressed. He wondered if he really did have to wear a pink suit.

"I wonder if you'd know," he said to Maria, swivelling his chair to face her, "whether one has to wear a pink suit on television?"

But the telephone rang at that moment and Maria only wondered, in her turn, whether the Washington summer was not driving him a little mad. She had seen that happen to people during their first year. "Congressman Haverford's office," she said into the phone. Hearing the voice at the other end, her face set stiffly and she nodded to Evans. "For you," she said.

Evans picked up the extension phone on his desk. "Howells here," he said, not being Anglophile for nothing. It was Mrs. Haverford calling. "My dear," he said, "I was just about to phone you. I have finished reading it." He had not; but knowing he never would, he wanted to get the discussion over with as soon as possible. It was the kind of book that one forgot as soon as one put it down. It was the single splendid feature of the Reverend Peter Minton Paul's literary efforts.

Margaret Haverford was delighted. She wanted Evans to come to dinner that very night.

Evans prepared to leave the office. He threw the Pittsburgh and Washington dailies in the waste basket, placed the sheets of his manuscript in the desk drawer, and was ready to go. He said to Maria, "I find it necessary to leave early today. I must dress for dinner. I am invited to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Haverford."

"That may be your *impression*," Maria said, "but the fact is—the fact is that the Congressman is in Pittsburgh. He makes a speech tonight to the Lithuanian-American Boys' Club of Duquesne Township."

"How civic-minded our youth have become. I suppose it is the influence of television. I understand the children have the choice of watching murder or Congressmen. It's enough to drive a sane man back to the movies."

"I find the movies a very relaxing way to spend the evening, Mr. Howells. They make no demand on the mind. Do you know the way to the Haverford home in Georgetown?"

"Yes; I have been there before."

"Ah," Maria said.

"What do you mean, *Ah?*"

"Are you discomfited by it, Mr. Howells?"

"I am never discomfited, Miss Wojechowski."

"Oh, Evans, what has happened? What has caused you to stop saying embarrassing things to me?"

"Perhaps," Evans said, and his voice broke in the middle of the word, two-syllable words having a

susceptibility to that at the best of times; and for Evans this was not the best of times—he was indeed a little hysterical at the pain of memory—“perhaps that black leather sofa will refresh your memory,” he said, pointing with a dramatic forefinger into Haverford’s office where the splendid great black sofa lay.

Maria dropped her eyes. “I see,” she said. “I see.”

Evans had recovered himself. “I have observed that when women say *I see* they invariably have a look of pained understanding. It is, I suppose another instance of their superiority to men, who have only the pain, but never the understanding.”

“Perhaps that is truer than you know,” Maria said.

Evans left without answering her. Indeed, he left because he could think of none.

An hour later he was sitting on Margaret Haverford’s terrace, at the white iron table, sipping an ice-cold cocktail. How much more relaxing it is, he thought, to be with people of one’s own class. He thrilled to the snobbery of this thought. He was essentially a wholly democratic and humane young man and he always thrilled to his rare snobberies like a Puritan who has a forbidden thought.

Mrs. Haverford, who was even taller than Evans remembered, was wearing a white dress with a billowing skirt. If there had been a wind, Evans thought, she would sail across the lawn like a galleon, her skirt spanking in the breeze.

Evans was content to wait for her to bring up the subject of *Through Thick and Thin; Our Lord’s Way to*

*the Moral Life.* Margaret seemed disinclined to do so.

"Dear John is addressing the Boys Club in Duquesne tonight. I do feel sorry for him. He always gets depressed when he goes there."

"Duquesne has that effect on many people."

"You see, before the depression, John's family owned half the slums there. Now, whenever he goes back, he feels like a dispossessed prince."

"Ah," Evans said, thinking that was one kingdom he would gladly give for a horse, any horse.

Mrs. Haverford had prepared so large a shaker of cocktails that Evans expected more guests would be arriving soon. But none appeared. After he had drunk his fifth, Evans was able to admit to himself that he knew there would be no other guests. He was aware that middle-aged women always feel it necessary to provide a great deal to drink when they were entertaining young men. But Evans could not decide for whom it was that so much artificial courage was thought necessary.

After dinner—sea-food, in the main—they returned to the terrace, where a refilled shaker awaited them on the table. Evans thought of that pitcher of milk in the fairy tale. Washington, he had discovered, was one of those places that always turned people's minds to old fables, myths, fairy tales. It was the only way to understand half of what was going on there.

"Have you noticed," he said, his tongue a little bleary, "that Washington is a place where things are constantly changing, yet nothing goes forward?"

Marga et Haverford looked at him without answering. Finally, she merely pursed her lips and took another drink.

"Perhapz I don't make myzelf clear," he said. He waved his hand in front of his face. "I don't know where all these  $\zeta$ 's are coming from."

"This time of year, Evans, you get all kinds of things. We spray, but . . ." She shrugged her shoulders with such abandon that some of her drink spilled on her dress.

"I dare say that's true, Margaret." It sounds like I have a German accent, he thought. How amusing. *Sehr amusant*. Next time he said anything, he decided he'd call her *gnadige Frau*.

She smiled weakly. "I've wanted you to call me Margaret for such a long time."

Had he? he wondered. Apparently he had. Well, he told himself, you can't call her *gnadige frau* now. And God knows when the opportunity will ever present itself again. You ought to grasp these things by the nettle. Opportu *istik*, don't wait for *you*, you know.

"Oh this moonlight," Marg. t said. She tried to fill her glass, but, since it wa. already brimful, it presented a small problem.

"Allow me," Evans said, and he poured it. The tabletop was quite wet as a result, but it slowly drained off on to his right shoe.

"You were zaying," Evans reminded her. "About the moonlight, *Liebchen*."

"Yes," she said, smiling at him still.

He felt a curious sense of disengagement. He was sure he had missed something important she must have said, something that gave the key to the whole thing.

He tried again. "Withal, this has been an interesting two weeks in Washington."

"Yes."

"It's a curious city."

"Yes?"

"I mean, half town, half city."

"Yes."

"One industry."

"Yes."

"I seem to have lost my z's."

"Yes."

He shrugged mentally. There seemed no way out. He recognized that Mrs. Haverford had achieved her aim: she could say nothing but *Yes*.

## 9

WITH Burke and Hare returned from their tour of investigation of the Information Centres, and the end of Congress's Summer Session only a few weeks off, there was a fury of activity in the offices of the members of Mugonnigle's Committee. Testimony was prepared for the favourite witnesses and a special scribe impressed to go through past testimony and ferret out any contradictions. It was this work that brought together Maria and Evans.

They were alone and working late in Haverford's big private office, the air-conditioning unit rattling on the window-sill. For hours that had been the only sound. Evans sat at Haverford's enormous desk that had the great seal of the nation burned into its leather top. *In God We Trust* was carved in low relief on the outer moulding of the ornately carved frame. Evans was reading the past testimony of Webster Calhoun; it was his assignment to catch any inconsistencies in the testimony prepared for Calhoun's next appearance before the Committee.

Irreverent reporters, among them the Aintrey brothers, had dubbed Webster Calhoun the Dean of

Informers. Mr. Calhoun was an intellectual. Since his dramatic and well-publicized break with The Conspiracy, Calhoun had been appointed a full professor at St. Swithin's Academy for Problem Boys. He taught Freshman Ethics. He was also a contributing editor to the distinguished quarterly, *Turncoat*, which was an anti-anti-anti-Communist publication supported by two foundations and one learned society. Calhoun was a powerful figure among the professional witnesses and secretly envied by most of them because he was the only one among them who had written a best-seller. Calhoun's eleven-hundred-page confession, *The Watchers and the Gazebo*, had been a December selection of the Right Wing Book Club (formerly the Left Wing Book Club).

It was nearly midnight before Evans finished his work. He leaned back in the chair and pushed the corrected pages of testimony away from him, as if he wanted to put as much space as possible between him and it.

He rubbed his eyes and mumbled, "Corruption corrupts and absolute corruption corrupts absolutely."

"It did seem strange to me when I first came here," Maria said, "how quickly one could become a part of this sort of thing. It would appear that even quite decent people will do the most outrageous things as long as they can tell themselves that it is their job to do so."

"Yes; I suppose one would never take up this sort of thing as a *hobby*; but approaching it as a life's

work does seem to give it a certain spurious dignity."

"It doesn't bear thinking on, Evans." Maria arranged her papers into a neat pile, slid them into an envelope marked *Prepared Testimony, Corrected*, and was then ready to leave.

"I'm going too," Evans said. And was surprised to hear himself add, "May I see you home?"

"I have my car. Let me drive you home."

"How nice of you that would be. Perhaps we can stop somewhere and you will let me buy a drink?"

"I do not drink."

"An ice-cream soda, then."

"I especially do not drink ice-cream sodas."

"You make me feel quite useless, Maria."

"You may buy me tea," she said, relenting.

Her took her elbow going down the dimly lighted stairs of the deserted building. He took a deep breath. "History has such an antiseptic odour," he commented.

"That's merely insecticide, Mr. Howells. They have had a terrible job keeping down the moths since Representative Dutton took to selling men's suits in his office."

"Does he do well at it?"

"I have heard the Congressmen complain that while his price was right his selection was limited. He gave it up some time ago, however, when he discovered there was more to be made, and at less risk, in building apartments with F.H.A. loans. Besides, it hardly contributed to the dignity of the House to have

him going about with a tape measure around his neck."

Once in her car they rode without speaking. She drove outside the city, into Virginia; they listened to the car radio and Evans fell asleep.

When they came to the highway restaurant she was looking for, she entered the driveway and parked. Evans did not wake up. She turned and looked at his face. It was so dark and intense, even in sleep. She touched his cheek with her fingers, very gently and hesitantly. He groaned and pressed his head closer to her arm. She kissed the top of his head and he woke.

"You would take advantage of me," he said, his face serious, but not quite accusatory.

"Oh, no; surely not, Evans. It was merely, an impulse I weakly gave way to."

"I like the way you make active words out of adverbs, Maria," he said with admiration.

"I majored in the Humanities at Pitt," she answered, as if that were explanation enough.

"Umm," Evans said.

"Is it Pittsburgh University you object to?" she asked, choleric in her loyalty.

"Indeed not. It is that we persist in calling it *Humanities*. Put Humanism in the hands of the academics and its loveliness and fire is soon reduced to an anaemic mish-mash. They cannot help it; that is the way they are. Only adventurers make good teachers. I don't want to give the impression that this is mature thought. As a matter of fact, it only just occurred to me."

"I suspected as much. It had that lamentably unpolished quality that spontaneity so often has. I am not much given to spontaneity myself for that reason; at least, not in the area of ideas. But I do believe it has a place in the emotional life."

"That's as may be," Evans said, removing his head from her shoulder and opening the door of the car. He walked around on the crunching gravel of the driveway and opened the door for Maria. They went inside. The place was nearly deserted. Tables were scattered, as if blown by the wind, about a small square of dance-floor. A Wurlitzer with coloured tubes simmered in a corner.

"Two pots of tea," Evans said to the waiter, who turned and muttered, "Wise guy." The order created no end of trouble in the kitchen. No one had seen the teapots for years. "Why don't they go back where they came from," the cook shouted.

Evans found two old songs on the machine and he and Maria danced to *My Blue Heaven* and *Tea for Two*. They held each other very close, but in a dispassionate way. For some reason, Evans found the marvellously clean odour of her hair the greatest excitement.

Back at the table they drank their tea in silence, Evans humming the tune of *Tea for Two*, nostalgic for a time he never knew.

"What days they must have been," he said lighting a cigarette. "The 'twenties."

"Looking back, it does seem like a tolerant time."

Quite impossible to imagine. The 'twenses seem un-American."

Evans played the two songs once more and they danced again. He found himself having the curious notion that if he held her in his arms long enough he could purify her. Men always have this notion when they fall in love with a woman like Maria, but Evans did not know this and thought that his was a quite special talent.

But it was not enough to support him and he heard his voice, and was amazed to hear it, crying, "Oh why did you do it? Why did you do it?"

And Maria, not looking at him, murmured, "It's not important. It isn't important, is it?"

"No," he said; "it isn't." But he knew it was.

And they were both right. It was important now, but after a while it would not be. After a while he would be able to tell himself, and believe it, that there had never been anyone else because the other one had not been as good and had not ever really touched her. Men live by such illusions.

Maria drove him home then and they parted in front of Mrs. Rambler's house, both utterly miserable.

## *10*

THE last days before the opening session of the Mugonnigle committee's hearings were full days indeed for Evans. Gone were the leisurely hours spent reading the American Legion magazine or brewing coffee in Arch Springer's office. Arch himself was out in the hot sun, scouring playgrounds for ringers for the next telecast of "Youth Puts the Questions", for Haverford was to be the guest, and Springer was taking no chances with those smart-aleck kids. He had his pocket stuffed with crisp new dollar bills that he had obtained from a friend in the Treasury Department -in exchange for old ones, of course, Arch was quick to point out. He knew where to draw the line.

Evans' work with the prepared testimony of Webster Calhoun had been so well received that he was promoted from the mere clerical correcting of testimony to the writing of it. It was the creative kind of work for which he felt himself better fitted. He was given a new witness for his very own, a portly, pompous young man named Matthew Hardison, and told to create a life for him. Evans found Hardison an

exceedingly colourless boy and therefore made his life a romantic adventure. From vagabondage in the Oregon lumber camps and shipping out to exotic ports in merchant ships to a clandestine life in high circles of The Conspiracy. It read like the dust-jacket biography of those writers whose novels are never so interesting as their lives. Hardison had been a messenger-boy for The Conspiracy newspaper, but by changing "messenger-boy" to "courier" Evans made the dull exciting. He wished he could feel like Pygmalion, but Hardison was such a repulsive Galatea.

And beyond all this there was Maria. It was a week since they had had tea together; they had since then hardly spoken to each other, each waiting for the other to make the first move. Evans sometimes thought of wonderfully brash things to say to her, but he had found a momentary happiness in his corrupting duties and did not want to spoil it with the miseries of love. Let it go, he told himself, let it go. It gave him the opportunity to be stoical; in his life there had been so little need for it that he grabbed at every chance. He had the notion that stoicism and manliness were one and the same thing. It was an idea that came from reading certain books, usually having to do with hunting, fishing, and a strenuous sort of love-making.

Evans had come to have a fondness for his job. The reason was obvious: it gave him a sense of power. It is what keeps underpaid Government clerks happy at their desks. By now he knew his way around the

House office building and had a nodding acquaintance with the guards and page-boys.

Occasionally he dropped into the visitors gallery and looked down at the Congressmen, boring each other on the House floor. He had a sense of belonging. It bored him too.

In the late afternoon of the hot day when Arch Springer went out to round up ringers at a dollar a throw in the parks and playgrounds of the city, Evans dozed at his desk, his head down, pretending to read a report on Swiss movements. He had to do a précis for the Congressman. It was precisely at that sweet moment when the body drifts into sleep that one of the clerks burst in with excited speechlessness, waving a newspaper, his eyes wide.

"Blug," he cried. "Springer."

"Calm yourself, Clark," Evans said. "There. Now what is all this about Blug and Springer?"

But Clark was not yet in complete control. "Blug," he said.

Evans snatched the paper from his hands and the double headline leaped up at him: HAYRFORD ASST. PICK'D UP BY COPS FOR IMPORTUNING SCHOOLBOYS.

"Good Lord!" Evans said, falling back on Anglophilic understatement in a time of crisis.

Hayrford at this moment came rushing in from the floor, his pink face quite red. "What does this mean?" he cried. He was thinking that now he'd never be invited to speak again at the Duquesne Boys Club. It lacked an apostrophe, but was full of votes.

Evans explained that Arch was merely off trying to buy some ringers for the "Youth puts the Questions" show; although he found it rather embarrassing to have to tell this to Haverford.

"Always was a clever bastard," Haverford said, smiling. "Too clever," he added, ceasing to smile. "Well, he'll pay for it now."

"You mean you're going to let him go to jail?" Evans asked.

"Let him go? Look here, Evans, Springer is a good soldier. He knows that if I clear him I'll only impugn myself. Springer will have to take the rap. That's all there is to it."

"I'll go down to see him," Evans said in a sadder and wiser voice.

"First stop in at the gallery and see if they're saying anything about it on the Floor. This is the kind of thing the Opposition leaps on."

Evans entered the gallery in time to hear that tall Congressman from Illinois cry: "Never did I think I'd live to see the day that this great country would go so far in its slavish emulation of England. I want to tell you, gentlemen—and it is no reflection on any of you gentlemen, because I know you are all gentlemen—all, all of us are gentlemen—I want to tell you, however, that this is the kind of thing that could only happen here in the *East*, among the England-loving states." The tall Illini took two paces back from his desk, lowered his head and bellowed: "Has the party of Lincoln become the party of lechery?"

Evan~~s~~ left to tell Haverford what was being said on the floor. Haverford groaned.

When Evans arrived at the police station, he saw John Probber of the Artificial Ice Lobby walking blindly down the steps. His face was wet with tears.

He told the desk sergeant he was from Haverford's office and wanted to see Mr. Springer.

"You want to be left alone with him?" the sergeant asked. He raised his eyebrows when Evans said that he did.

Springer, wearing a white linen waistcoat and a black dacron suit gave the small bare room an elegance it had never had before.

"Evans, how good of you. Come to see the monster, have you?"

"Just saw your friend Probber of the Artificial Ice lobby."

"Yes, yes," Arch sighed. "The poor boy believed the headlines and took it all quite personally. Seemed to think it indicated some inadequacy in himself. I don't think I was able to be as reassuring as I might have been. I've been here only a few hours, Evans, but I already feel apart, marvelously apart, from the push, bustle, and hurry of the outside world. I think this will prove a quite pleasant experience for me. Jail is not without its attractions; and having spent my childhood in Army posts, it is like coming home again."

"But aren't you going to tell them what you were really doing?"

"Good heavens, no, Evans." He was shocked at the suggestion. "In the first place, no one would believe me. And in the second place, we have a code, you know, we who hang on the coat-tails of power. We have to be like Aristotle's good soldier and do whatever we are bid. But there, don't look so sad, Evans. We who live by the lie and the hidden mike must die by them. Every double-cross deserves another; and, more fatally, every gravy train must grind to a halt. Emblazon these maxims on your bed-posts and live to a wealthy, old age, full of honours—that is my wish for you." He swivelled in his chair and shouted, "Sergeant!"

The desk sergeant entered. He was pulling a large handkerchief from his pocket, evidently to wipe his sweating brow.

"I am ready, Sergeant," Springer said; and, raising an imperious hand, he added, "The blindfold will not be necessary."

## *II*

**I**N the Committee's offices the typists had been working overtime for a week, preparing copies of confidential and top-secret memoranda stolen from various departments, and typing long lists of quotations painfully wrenched from context. In the darkroom, quite ordinary men in rubber aprons made photostatic copies of forged letters, and cropped photographs in a meaningful way.

Congressman Mugonniiple's statements to the Press had quickly driven Arch Springer's story off the front pages. It was mentioned now only by the political columnists. One columnist wrote: "My Prophecy for the Week: The Springer incident will not be the last of its kind. This sort of thing is not limited solely to the State Department, as we reported to you months ago. It will be interesting to see whether the Democrats will feel sure enough of themselves to make effective use of this political dynamite in the coming campaign. Will they have the courage to throw the first stone?"

The Aintrey twins used it as the occasion to break the story on the situation in the Oregon hatcheries;

and David Lawrence wrote a column which said that things were not as bad as they seemed or, conversely, they were worse.

Haverford, a latent sense of decency forcing itself to the surface before final extinguishment, had a chat with the judge. The result was a light sentence one year. With time off for good behaviour, Springer would be out in six months, although the judge took a dim view of the possibility that Springer's jail behaviour could possibly be good. Still, as an old friend of the Congressman, he would see what could be done. He knew of a jail where the guards were said to be congenial and the warden broadminded. And the rehabilitation programme at this particular jail was also excellent. Springer would learn to weave baskets.

With this oft what passed for a conscience, Haverford turned to the work of the Committee. With the opening session but two days away, he settled down to a study of the issues. He made small drama of his devotion "I am going to closet myself in my office," he told Maria and Evans. In a louder voice, for all the reporters to hear, he added, "I'll take no phone calls. Not even from the President himself." Haverford would accept adulation from any quarter; men get that way who never receive any from their wives. So also do those who get too much from their wives. It is such things as this that makes a woman's life so burdensome.

But the last days of preparation for the opening Session left Maria and Evans with little to do, all the

work now being of a clerical nature. Their last duty, reserving rooms for the Committee witnesses at White's Hotel, had been accomplished.

When the witnesses were together there was always a ruckus. Maria had warned him. That morning a delegation of three had come to the office to protest the fact that while they had a single room and bath each, Webster Calhoun had an entire suite. They had brought a petition signed by all the witnesses, and two city council men.

But Evans handled the situation with admirable dispatch. "If Mr. Calhoun has a suite," he said, "then Mr. Calhoun has paid for it out of his own pocket. I was authorized to reserve single rooms only. At least," he added, remembering what he had learned from his reading of transcripts of past Committee hearings, "at least, that is true to the best of my recollection."

The three witnesses accepted this proviso without cavil. They had to. They lived by it.

One of the witnesses said, "The son-of-a-bitch told us that Mugonnigle himself had taken the suite for him. He even showed us a vase of flowers that he said were from Mugonnigle."

"To the best of my recollection . . ." Evans began.

The three men started out of the office. "Okay. Okay," they said; they knew when they were licked. Evans stood silent for a moment after they had gone. He felt quite depressed; it was the feeling one has walking through the ruins of a bombed city.

Maria touched his arm. "I know, Evans. I know. It's always very bad, meeting them for the first time. They remind me of the circus roustabouts, used to see when I was a little girl. So lost and homeless. Yet, is it inhumane of me, Evans, that I feel no pity for them? They seem to be lacking certain essential human qualities . . . this bought-and-paid-for patriotism . . ."

Evans took her elbow and steered her to the far side of the room. There, partly hidden by a larger than lifesize bust of Mr. Buchanan, Pennsylvania's single contribution to the White House, Evans kissed her gently on the forehead and said, "Maria, you are very dear to me."

She lowered her eyes. "Your kiss," she whispered, "was of such a purity that I am not discomfited, even in front of all these typists."

"Let's get out of this place, Maria."

"You mean for good and all?" she asked, with an eagerness that astonished him.

But that was not what he meant.

"All right. Even for a few hours, Evans. We'll drive somewhere."

As they were leaving the office, Evans remembered he had still to do one task for Haverford. "Hell," he said. "Haverford wants me to get him a book. He wants it today."

"Send Clark for it," Maria suggested.

But Clark refused to go. He wouldn't be caught dead walking into a book-store, he said; he had a wife and kids to support.

"But this is official business, Clark. Haverford wants this book."

"I don't care, Mr. Howells. It was the same thing with this friend of mine from Printing and Binding. His kid wanted a copy of *Pogo*, and like a damn fool he went into a *book-store* to get it, not a drug-store, like all the rest of us do. He was suspended for three months while they investigated."

"Was he fired?"

"No; but he's under surveillance."

"All right, Clark. I suppose I'll have to do it myself."

"You're a single man, Mr. Howells; you can afford the risk."

"It won't take us long, Evans," Maria said. "I have the address of a book store only a few blocks from here. We'll leave it with the doorman and Clark can come down for it in fifteen or twenty minutes. Is that all right with you, Clark?"

"See that it's well wrapped," he said, and looked nervously at his watch.

"Shall we synchronize?" Evans asked him as he walked out.

The bookstore was situated between a laundry and a fruit-and-vegetable store at the edge of the slum district. It had a narrow front, a door and a small display window. There was nothing in the window but a vase with dusty artificial flowers. *Charley's Place* was crudely lettered on the door.

"Is this it?" Evans asked, incredulous. Coming

from Cambridge, a shamelessly bookish town, he was accustomed to bookstores that proclaimed themselves unmistakably as purveyors of books.

Oddly enough, the book-dealer was cheerful and expansive.

"Come in, come in," he said, acting like a red-checked tavern-keeper in a Hollywood version of Dickens. "Well, sir and madame, what's it going to be —the complete works of Lenin, Stalin on Leninism, or volume four of *Das Capital* in the new unsympathetic translation? I supply the research staffs of our leading investigating committees and you'll find my stock can answer your every need." He gestured, a wide sweep of the shelves and the hundreds of neatly arranged books. "Not a single volume, that, doesn't contain dynamite," he said, happily.

"I want a book by Tom Paine," Evans said.

"I've got a beautiful buy, sir. The complete works, marbellized."

"A thin one-volume Selection will do admirably."

"I see," the man said. "It's for a Congressman then, if I may make bold."

"Paine was quite a feller," the bookseller added, climbing the ladder to a high shelf. "Wouldn't give a Confederate dollar for his chances if he was alive today."

He wrote out the receipt. It was the last one in his book. "That's the third book today. By God, feller, there hasn't been anything like this since prohibition."

"Wrap it well," Evans said.

"Oh, you don't have to tell *me!* I know more about this game than you'll ever know." He slipped the book into a bag, then put it in a box. On the box was printed in large block letters: ARTHUR'S CLOTHES FOR MEN. WE DON'T LET YOU WEAR IT UNLESS IT FITS. He fitted a handle to the box. "There you are, sir. If for any reason this is not satisfactory, I also have shopping bags stamped AI'S SUPERMARKET OR . . ."

"This will do nicely, thank you."

"Come back soon again," the bookseller said, opening the door for them. As they reached the sidewalk his voice was lowered to a husky whisper: "Any day now I'm expecting a shipment of Mao Tse-tung's book on culture. It's dynamite."

He watched them get into the car and, as they drove off, he wrote the licence number down on his cuff.

Clark was waiting when they drove up to the House Office building. As he took the box he said, in a loud voice, "I'll give this to the Congressman right away. He's waiting for it."

"Let us hope that it fits," Evans said.

It was dark when they arrived in Williamsburg. They sat on a bench and made love in the Colonial Garden next to the Restoration A&P.

## I2

WHITE'S HOTEL, where the witnesses were quartered, was a relic of Victorian days. Its lobby was crowded with fat marble columns festooned with wreaths of plaster fruit; the management held to the view that the removal of potted palms had begun the downfall of the grand hotels of the past. The rooms were high-ceilinged and spacious; every window had its folding shutters of polished cherry-wood, and above each bed was a fan with four large blades that turned slowly as a windmill, churning the muggy air. It had once been a showplace and was particularly admired by visiting Englishmen. In late years, however, it was frequented mostly by unsuccessful salesmen, fifty-one-day witnesses, and high school senior classes come to pay their respects to the seat of government.

During this week the hotel's fourth floor was given over entirely to the graduating class of the Boys' High School of Automotive and Traffic Arts of Kinessis, Idaho. After a fatiguing day climbing the Washington Monument, they were now filling paper bags with water and dropping them from their windows on to

the heads of passers-by on the sidewalk. Unlike some of the modern, air-conditioned hotels, White's management did not provide them with the paper bags. Indeed, the management took a dim view of the whole procedure, but tolerated it, acknowledging a debt to these future citizens. The future citizens hung out of the windows crying, "H-bombs awaaaaay," as they let their water bombs fall. And their teachers could not very well tell them to stop. Such things as H-bombs had, indeed, been a part of their Training for Life.

The continuous bursting into the lobby of irate, wet pedestrians was a constant source of embarrassment to the witnesses. They, once out of The Conspiracy, wanted nothing so much as respectability. It offended them to be housed with the senior class of the Boys' High School of Automotive and Traffic Arts, and they had already gotten up a petition demanding that Congress buy a country house in some nearby section of Virginia. It was the least, they thought, a grateful Government could do for them. It was also designed in their plans, to provide a sanctuary for aged witnesses; and, it was true, some of them were getting on in years and worn out with chasing around the country from one trial to another. It was not a restful life. As Louis Budlong once said to the Attorney-General at a private luncheon (later reported by the Aintrey twins): "How would you like to spend *your* life under the constant threat of perjury?" The Aintreys reported that the Attorney-General said he would not.

The petition had been sympathetically received by Mugonnigle, but had bogged down in the Armed Services Committee, to which it was referred. The Party leadership disapproved of the idea. They felt it was too much like putting all your eggs in one basket. One member of the Party's executive—he was from Long Island—offered the example of the recent fire in the Whitney's stables.

The Chairman said, "I think that brings the point home to all of us. Someone will have to tell Mugonnigle that it can't be done."

But no one could be found who was willing to tell Mugonnigle. Instead, they got it bogged down in committee.

The witnesses therefore continued to take rooms in White's Hotel, with the thought of old age a constant worry. Senator Cunningham of Kansas had tried to get them included in the Social Security Act, but was defeated by his own party; they would extend it no further. Paid witnesses, along with chauffeurs, chicken-farmers, bookies, doctors, and Swedish masseurs were ineligible. No one knew why. It was Policy. J. B. Goodfriend, the Senate Whip from California, had said, "Thus far and no further," and so it had been.

But if they could not have security, the witnesses could have respectability. The men dressed in sombre business suits with stiff collars attached to their white shirts. They tried to look as much as possible like the Secretary of State, although not one of them had his

rugged jaw. The ladies affected a dowdy look. It was not entirely an affectation. More accurately, one might say that they made the most of their weak points, of which they had many.

Only two women were among this group of witnesses. Hilde Meinschaft, author of *Out of the Muck*, was there; her first book, written in Germany in the early 'thirties and never translated, was called, *Zu die Barricaden!* It gave her pain, as she said, translating from the German, it gave her pain to think how that first book more successful was.

The other woman, Anna Marie Peritonitis, was not in the lobby with the others. The youngest by many years, she had little in common with her colleagues. At White's Hotel she spent the late afternoon hanging out her window, dropping bags of water on the heads of the high school boys two floors below. Respectability had never been what she sought.

\*It was, of course, Webster Calhoun who had introduced this new note of manner and dress among the witnesses. In the early days the witnesses affected the look and manner of hard-bitten adventurers. But they had quickly followed Calhoun's lead when they saw what a good thing he was making of it. Calhoun never appeared before a committee, or took the stand at a trial of Conspirators, or pointed his finger at a man accused of perjury or contempt—as anything other than a practical philosopher. He was a master at giving juries the impression that he had nothing to give but advice. He could only counsel. He could,

because he had had the singular experience of living through the depression years, and because he had participated in Certain Activities, offer what little he knew.

He had the marvellous ability—all the other witnesses admitted it—of wrapping a jury around his pudgy little finger. Even hardened Foley Square jurors burst into tears when Calhoun, himself crying, named his brother as the arch-conspirator behind the plot to besmirch the good name of Chiang-Kai-shek.

For a time, so slavish of Calhoun did the other witnesses become that two of them even went out and bought farms—though not as big as his—with the earnings from the sale of their confessions to Gory Cosmics.

At the big table in White's dining-room, the seat at the head was always left vacant for Calhoun. He took dinner with them, walking in like the Grand Old Man of the profession that he was, portly, dignified, late.

On the night before the opening of the hearing there was a thin air of tension over the dining table. Only Calhoun seemed unaffected by it. The others envied him his "quick-read" ability. He memorized his testimony, and was letter-perfect after one reading; once on the stand, he never hesitated; and under cross-examination he did not deign to take advantage of the best-of-my-recollection dodge.

Calhoun had prepared himself for his new profession

with the thoroughness of the born scholar. He had read all the military manuals on sabotage; he was able to speak learnedly of T.N.T. and crimping tools and cordite. He had never actually seen any of them. He also became a recognized lay authority on parachute drops and, such was his knowledge, the editor of the *Infantry Journal* had invited him to contribute articles.

But magazines like that, although redolent with prestige, do not pay sufficiently well for a gentleman farmer. Much as he disliked it, he was forced to write articles for digest magazines like *Read as You Run* and the new bi-annual magazine, *Rdrs. Dgst.* For the latter he wrote his memorable 'How It Feels to Finger Your Brother' (reading time, 3 mins. 22 secs.), for wh. he recd. \$1,500.

It was Richard Funck who started the conversation on this evening, and dissipated the tension that was threatening to ruin the witnesses' dinner. Funck was the only one of them who had not written a book. He felt himself to be something of an outsider among his colleagues, not quite their social equal because he had come up the hard way. He had spent years on the sawdust trail, appearing as a paid witness at the countless deportation trials of quite unknown people. But in time he had come, by dint of perseverance and an exceptional ability to memorize testimony, to make a name for himself at last and received a call from a touring Congressional committee. He had arrived in the big time at last. This was his first Washington

appearance and he felt the stirrings of that stage fright experienced by all good actors.

"I can remember back to when I was four years old and stuck my thumb in my sister's eye," he said to get the conversation going and relax the tenseness he felt.

This conversational game evoked a quick response from the assembled witnesses. Stretching their memories was, understandably, an exercise in which they all engaged. Indeed, some had been stretched so far and so often they were in danger of becoming flabby.

All but Webster Calhoun rushed to tell of early memories. Anna Marie Peritonitis went back to her third birthday party; and Hilde Meinschaft, author of *Out of the Muck*, recalled a strike of weavers in her village in Germany when she was one and a half years old.

"Bravo, Hilde Meinschaft!" the witnesses softly cried, thinking she had won the game for that night; but Webster Calhoun had yet to be heard from. He patted his lips with the napkin and said, "I have a pre-natal memory."

He described it for them. Very dark it was. Very warm and awfully comfortable. Birth was a frightful agony. ". . . thrust out into the coldness, the harshness," he whispered, his eyes staring mildly at the corner of the small dining-room where the flowered wallpaper met without a seam. "Mother was brave," he recalled, "but terribly uninformed."

Two men wearing false moustaches, sitting on a

leather sofa behind three potted palms, took it all down in shorthand. It was the Aintry twins. Since they were both wearing the same style false moustache, their disguises were not really very effective. The manager of the hotel, being a man of Old World sensibility, had pretended to be deceived.

They nodded to each other over their shorthand pads. Larned whispered to Procter, "This is what we reporters call *leg work*."

Procter said, "I wonder if it will also be what is called a *scoop*."

"That," said Larned with his haunting sense of the Long View, "that is for History to decide."

## I3

LIKE an operating-room, Evans thought, who had seen one once. Something sterile and cold, forbidding, about the marble floors and walls that sent all voices echoing and crashing back and forth, endowing the weakest utterance with sputious strength. And the lights set up by the television crews were blaring and harsh as the light that blazed over the body, on the table. The hearing stenographer opened, with a careful sense of importance, his low tripod; and set on it the stenographic machine that would take down in silent symbols every easy lie and anguished cry of truth.

Late, as he always was, Mugonnigle entered the hearing-room. He was the distinguished surgeon flanked by his admiring assistants, the interne-lawyers R. John Burke and G. Duncan Harc. The television cameras swung ponderously, like the heads of prehistoric beasts, in Mugonnigle's direction. His face had been powdered to remove the glare, but the powder would not last long. The make-up men referred to him as The Sweater. The sound-men, having other preoccupations, called him The Belcher.

This appellation was the result of Mugonnigle's unfortunate stomach trouble. He had always been proud of what he liked to call his cast-iron stomach; but ever since he had been elected to Congress, from the day he made his maiden speech (an attack on our wartime allies), his stomach had suddenly gone back on him. To television viewers who did not know, his constant suppressions of gas gave him the look of a man who was always holding back an explosion of anger. But it was only gas.

Mugonnigle had a powerful, resonant voice; yet, such was the man's sense of achievement, he had succeeded in converting this rich instrument into the most droning and boring voice in the House. On only one occasion, however, had any witness fallen asleep on the stand. This was the writer of detective stories, Dartnell Harnett, who dozed off during a Mugonnigle question that lasted fifteen minutes. He woke up in time to say, "No."

Mugonnigle was built squat and wide, with a big, square-shaped head. He liked to give the impression of a Man in Movement and, whenever the cameras were on him, he did not walk, but charged. To the home viewers, Mugonnigle always appeared like a tank approaching road blocks. In the privacy of his office, however, he sprawled largely in his desk chair, looking very much like the small-town justice of the peace he once had been.

Having once been a justice of the peace, he felt he had the right to say to recalcitrant witnesses, "If

you had appeared before me when I was a judge back home. . ." Or, "Never in all my years as a judge . . ." He liked to give the impression that being a Congressman was quite a come-down, really, from those happier and more dignified days when he was a judge; and that his being a Congressman was an onerous duty he had accepted out of an over-developed sense of patriotism.

Indeed, his manner was that of the martyr. Beset from all sides, harassed by New Yorkers, Conspirators, and the British, Democrats, and the members of his own Party as well, his voice, even in the midst of his greatest triumphs, was always the voice of exasperation. Look how I am put upon, was the message of its tone.

When, for example, he said to a witness, "Have you ever engaged in espionage?"—and added, "Now, I am not trying to entrap you"—and on these occasions the audience laughed, Mugonnigle would get a look of genuine pain on his face. He would say, exasperated, wounded, beset, "There is no need for laughter. I am sure the witness knows that I am not trying to entrap him. Now I will ask you the question again," and Mugonnigle would sigh with fatigue, his heavy voice droning, his eyes half shut with weariness.

As soon as Mugonnigle was seated at the head of the long polished table, the Press photographers swarmed toward him, their bulbs flashing. Mugonnigle set a look of serious purposefulness on his big face. This consisted of deepening the lines of frustration

that grooved his cheeks from nose to mouth. After the serious picture had been taken he set a smile of false brilliance on his face for the second one. He had a hangman's affability.

The picture-taking over, the photographers retreated to their seats in the first row of the crowded Press section, hugging the cameras to their chests. They were more alert than anyone else in the hearing-room, ready on the instant to leap to their feet, bulbs flashing, when a witness opened his mouth, tugged at his trousers, or scratched his nose.

What they liked most of all was a good yawn. Editors were nearly always willing to pay ten dollars for a yawn, especially if it was the yawn of a well-known witness. This is what is called Smart Journalism.

Mugonnigle rapped his gavel and announced the hearing open. "The purpose of this hearing," he said, suppressing gas, "is . . . to bring before the public . . ." his voice was tired already and he pretended to be looking through some papers while he spoke . . . "the facts about this country's so called Information programme. For this purpose we have called here . . ." he found the sheet he was looking for and held it up before his face . . . "several Information Department directors from several countries in Europe and the Far East. I don't want to say that these men are traitors. I will not brand them as traitors until all the evidence is in. They will have their day in court and, as a former judge, I will see to it they get a fair hearing."

He put the paper back in the folder and closed it, reached for another folder, and continued: "When both sides have had their say, I have no doubt that the American People will make up their own minds as to the activities of these men who are supposed to be the representatives of America in foreign lands. I don't want to prejudge them. I think everyone here knows that. If these men"—he sighed—"are *not* guilty, they'll have every chance to prove it. This Committee holds to the American view that a man is innocent until he is proved guilty. I think everyone here knows that."

He stopped to blow his nose, turning half away from the camera to do so. "Excuse me," he said, having a kind of delicacy. He opened a folder and began leafing through the pages; he read some lines of apparently horrifying information. He shook his head and smiled sadly.

"However," he said, "however, I don't want to go overboard with that philosophy. Some men are guilty. We know they are guilty. It's our duty to go after these men with everything in the armoury. Now there are those," and he smiled tolerantly at these, "there are those--I hear them on the radio, I read them in *The Conspiracy Press*, *The Times* and *The Tribune*--there are those who say, Let's be gentlemen. *Let's be gentlemen.*" He made that word sound utterly disgusting, as if gentlemen were people who beat their mothers or failed to salute the flag.

A look of suffering suffused his face. I am a man of

sensitivity, he was saying, I am pained to have to be forced to talk this way, but History has set itself upon my back and will not let me rest.

"Now, if these traitors—I mean, these *men*, who have been called here to testify about what looks to us like very suspicious activities in foreign lands—if these men, I say, can give satisfactory answers to our questions, why, then, I say, they will have nothing but approval from me. We will then go on to find out who hired them in the first place and who made the policies that they so ill-advisedly carried out."

He turned to the chief counsel, R. John Burke, who sat on his right hand. "Call the first witness," he said. Burke, who looked as if he had not seen the sun for at least ten years, leaned toward Mugonnigle and whispered in his ear. Twenty cameras flashed. Mugonnigle nodded. Burke sat back and smiled at his assistant, G. Duncan Hare, who returned a shy smile. They had an almost brotherly pride in each other's accomplishments.

"My assistant, Mr. Burke, informs me—thank you, John—that we have a surprise witness, someone we did not expect to get hold of quite so soon. He is an obviously subversive writer—but I don't want to prejudge the man; let him speak and reveal himself without my aid—an obviously subversive writer, I say, whose books are on the shelves of every Information Centre library in the world—the free world, that is. And these inflammatory books, preaching revolution and atheism, are paid for and distributed

by Government funds. Your tax money, ladies and gentlemen. These books aim to subvert our way of life by calling down vile calumny on the heads of our most dedicated public servants. This writer, for example, this writer who we are about to call to testify, has made it a point to attack this committee's chief counsel, R. John Burke, whenever possible. We will now question this man whose words are being offered to the people of Europe and Asia through the misguided—I don't want now to use any stronger word than that—the *misguided* efforts of our own government. Call the first witness, John."

Mr. Burke rose and signalled the hearing-room clerk, who rose in turn and cried, "Thomas Paine. Thomas Paine. Will Thomas Paine take the stand?"

## I4

THOMAS PAYNE was close to seventy and straight as a ramrod; over six feet tall and his hair pure white. His skin was brown from wind and sun and seasoned like good leather.

Two men of Mugonnigle's investigative staff found him living near the old workings of an abandoned mine near the ghost town of Crowning Glory, Montana.

Picking him up was the result of a tip given them by the President of the Montana Women Minute Men, a patriotic organization dedicated to making the Constitution inoperative. The old man, Tom Paine, had been running for the governorship of Montana for nearly thirty years as the write-in candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party.

The information from the Montana Women Minute Men gave Mugonnigle's investigating staff the lead they were seeking. Before that, they had been looking in the Boston area, because the chief investigator's girl-friend lived there. The subpoena had been made out in Paine's name ever since, well before, the request to pick him up had come from Burke and Hare, who were then in Europe.

The two men who served the summons on Tom Paine in the name of the Committee were former Baltimore policemen. They had been forced to leave their jobs because of an exaggerated sense of kindness towards bookies. Humanists both, they had a vast willingness to give bookies a second chance—even, when their sympathies were sufficiently played upon, a third and fourth chance. This all too human weakness was in the end their downfall and they were reduced to spending their declining years serving summonses for Congressman Mugonnigle. There is nothing like serving a summons, they found, to make a man feel unwanted.

Tom Paine was sitting on a backless chair in front of his cabin when they approached, puffing a bit as they struggled up the steep hill from Crowning Glory. As if to make sure all this would not be in vain, they stopped as soon as they had come within hailing distance. "Are you Tom Paine?" the fatter one called.

"That I am," came the answer, and the two summons-bearers resumed the climb.

The less fat one handed the summons to Tom Paine. "You are hereby summoned," he began, and recited off the rest of it with all the feeling of a sleepy justice of the peace marrying off a couple who are in just as great a hurry to get it over with as he is.

"Well, I'll be dogged," Tom Paine said.

They looked inside his austerey furnished cabin.

"You writers don't earn much, do you?" the fatter one asked.

"I always manage to pay my own way," Tom Paine said.

"As long as we're travelling back to Washington, you might as well come along. That way you won't get lost."

"I never took a trip as long as that except by freight," Tom said.

"This time you're going by plane. Gift of a grateful Government."

"And about time," Tom said. "Well, I am ready. What are we waiting for?"

"Don't you want to pack some clothes and all?" the distinguished one asked.

"I always travel light, feller. Let's go."

The two former policemen shrugged with their faces and the three set off down the mountain. As they walked through the deserted streets of Crowning Glory, the very fat one said, "So you're the author of *Common Sense*." He looked at Tom Paine as if he just couldn't believe it.

"I never claimed to be the author of it," Tom said, laughing. "I just like to employ it whenever I can. That's all."

"We all make mistakes," the other said. "I'm not blaming you."

"The Congressman never'd minded if you had stuck to that anti-British stuff. But it was a foolish mistake to go and attack Burke. I mean, Burke is his boy. You can't buck the machine. I am surprised, an old man like you."

"I don't know," the other one said. "Let's not go

blaming. We only read the research staff's report. We haven't heard the old man's side of it yet." The less fat one sometimes extended his humanity beyond bookies. He would probably lose another job before his career as a public servant had ended.

"This ghost town gives me a queer feeling," the fat one said to change the subject.

"No people, you mean?"

"No telephones. Any town that don't have telephones is no place for me."

"Which Burke is that you're talking of?" Tom Paine asked.

"Oh now don't give us that routine," Fat said. "Next thing you'll be claiming a loss of memory."

"My memory is good," Paine said. "I've kept it honed sharp, for there is nothing in it that can cause me a moment's pain. I ask what Burke it is because I have lived a long time and I've been trying to sort out the various Burke's I have known. I guess I've knew a passel of Burke's in my time, including one family of fourteen of them. The parents, eleven children, and an old uncle who for some reason found it restful to roost with his kin."

"I don't think that can be the same Burke," Less Fat said. "This Burke we are talking about has the look of a man who never had a brother. He points like only an only child can."

"Is that so?" Paine said. "Well, I mind of a whole slew of Burke's I've met in my time. We'll just see who this one turns out to be."

After a walk long enough to tire the two former policemen—about ten city blocks—they came out on the highway. The two city men crowded into a spear of shade provided by a fence post, and they waited for the bus.

At the airport, Tom Paine walked toward the plane with wondering eyes. "First time I ever saw one of these close up." He turned to the fat one. "How fast would you say these things travel, old hoss?"

"Three hundred miles per hour, and better than that with a tail-wind."

Tom shook his head admiringly. "You know, seller, when my daddy caine out this way with the wagon trains, they made fifteen miles a day. That was on good days." He started up the steps to the plane. "We have come such a long way so fast it like to make us dizzy."

When Tom's name was called in the hearing-room he still could feel the enormous power of the plane reverberating in his bones; so fast had it all been that the mountain odour, clean and fresh, was still on him.

After he had been sworn, he sat down and looked around him, frankly curious.

"You are Thomas Paine?"

He looked at Mugonnigle. "All my life, son, all my life."

"Ask the witness to answer yes or no, Mr. Burke," Mugonnigle said, too tired to do it himself.

"Answer yes or no," Burke instructed.

"So you're Burke," Tom said. "Are you one of old Charlie Burke's boys, then, who panned for gold along the Snokie River and ran a pig-farm on the side? You don't look much like the family, but you have a tol'ble resemblance to the livestock."

"I'm from Philadelphia," Burke said.

"Are you trying to tell us," Mugonnigle began, his voice rising from its bed of pain, "are you trying to tell us that your attack on R. John Burke, the Committee counsel, is the result of mistaken identity? Is that what you're trying to tell us?"

"Old Charlie Burke was always a hard-luck man. I mind the time he missed a gold strike by five minutes and . . ."

"I don't want to hear about this Old Charlie Burke. We didn't call you down here to listen to your evasions."

"I just wanted to say that if this was Old Charlie's boy, then his luck surely did run out completely at the end." He looked at R. John Burke and smiled. "Boy, you sure are a *dinger*." He leaned forward and rubbed the cuff of Burke's summerweight nubby-tweed suit. "Must itch like crazy," he said in a low voice.

At a nod from Mugonnigle, a uniformed guard placed himself beside the witness chair.

"I'm going to give you warning, Mr. Paine. You aren't here to make publicity for yourself. *This* isn't a sideshow or a circus. We are here to investigate the

serious, the life and death business of subversion. You are here to answer our questions. If you persist in your unco-operative behaviour, I will have to have you removed. I don't want to have to do that, Mr. Paine. Out of respect for your white hairs, I don't want to have to do that. If you've been duped and used by The Conspiracy I want you to tell us. Now let's try again. Let me ask you this, Tom--you don't mind if I call you Tom?—let me ask you this, Tom: Did you ever go to Harvard?"

"Off and on in my young days I went there. Had an uncle who lived there."

"Was he a professor?"

"Uncle Daniel? Why, man, he could hardly write his own name. He was a farmer; put all his acres in wheat."

"At Harvard?"

"Yes, sir. Harvard, Wyoming, was noted as wheat country before the topsoil blew away."

The audience laughed and Mugennigle rapped his gavel. "There is no need for laughter. This is not a laughing matter. If this man thinks he can get away with this sort of nonsense, he is mistaken. We are a duly appointed Committee of Congress, and we have the right and the duty, under the Constitution—what we have left of it—to investigate. And we are going to investigate, and no one, not this subversive old man or anyone else, is going to stop us from investigating. Now Mr. Paine, I am not trying to entrap you, but how do you arrange for the money from a certain

foreign power that you use to support your election campaigns? I have information that shows you've run for Governor of Montana in six campaigns under the ticket of the Freedom and Glory Party—a party, by the way, which is listed as a Conspiracy Front Organization. This Committee so voted to list it at executive session this morning. Now I'm not saying," he moaned in exasperation, "I'm not saying that you're not within your right to run for Governor. That is every American's privilege. And I'm not saying you don't have the right to form a party and run for office under its name. Every American has that right Until we declare the party illegal, that is. All I want to know is. Where do you get the money?"

"The only moncy I get is my old age pension. And the only expense of my campaigns is for printing up the posters. Old Rabbit Halleran down Chimney Rocks way, he runs them off for me on a old hand press. We been friends for near fifty years and he don't charge me much. He just saves the plate from one campaign to the next and the only cost is the paper. Rabbit Halleran and me has been great frienuds since 1904, when we worked for the same newspaper."

Mugonnigle leaned forward. "What was the name of that paper?"

"If I remembcr it rightly, that was the *Butte New-Ledger Times*. It went out of business in the Panic. I was chief mechanic in the print shop and Rabbit was the foreman. When that folded, Old Rabbit joined up with me and we went looking for gold along the

Snokie." He smiled at R. John Burke. "That's where we met Old Charlie Burke. Kin of yorn?"

"I don't think so," R. John said. He was the most brilliant man of his age group in Washington and wrote his autobiography at the age of twenty-four.

"Well, that didn't pan out, like we say, and we went up north-west and got work in a sawmill. Stayed on there a few years until Old Rabbit lost an arm. Then I went down to Seattle and shipped out for a few years: Hawaii, the Philippines, Singapore. I sort of half-married a lady in Singapore, but . . ."

Mugonnigle rapped his gavel. "Let me remind you, sir, that you are speaking before a family audience. And while I'm on this subject, I want to take this moment to thank the sponsors of 'Theodora, Lady Judge' and 'Life Will Be Beautiful Tomorrow' for relinquishing their time. Go on, Mr. Paine."

"After about--oh, say ten years—I decided I ought to settle down. I was near forty then and thought that was old. Well I went back to Montana, which has always been my home and I opened up a little machine shop. Things were going good then and I made out all right. I got a wife, but she died of the flux, and right after that I lost my shop in the Panic."

"Well, Paine, I think I understand now the cause of your bitterness . . ."

· "I'm not bitter. . . ."

" . . . because you lost your little shop during a mild downturn which did not really exist, anyway, except in your own mind. Men who lost a great deal

more than you, Paine, lost because of a defeatist state of mind, have risen again. They haven't turned on their own country."

"I haven't turned on anybody. I only did what many others have done. When I went bankrupt I went into politics."

"Thank God, I say thank God—for the sake of this country of ours, I say it—thank God you are as unsuccessful in politics as you were in business. I would not sleep safe in my bed if a man like you held public office." He picked up a sheet of paper. "Didn't you write this clearly subversive statement, 'Lay then the axe to the root, and teach governments humanity'? Didn't you write that, Mr. Paine?"

"I've wrote a lot in my day."

"You don't find anything objectionable in this statement?"

"Well, son, it's like asking me if I object to the sun rising every morning. It's a fact of nature. Nothing you or I can do about it."

Mugonnigle narrowed his eyes for the television audience. "I see," he said, mysteriously. He shuffled some papers on the table before him. "I would like to read into the record," he mumbled, not looking up, "I would like to read into the record . . . one of the most envenomed attacks . . . that The Conspiracy has ever made against a member of this Committee or its staff. In this case . . . the man attacked was our staff counsel, R. John Burke, one of the most brilliant young men of his age group in Washington . . . and

the vicious attacker . . ." he looked up now and pointed a beefy finger . . . "was that man, that man, Tom Paine!" Forty flashbulbs flared. Mugonnigle held his finger rigid. "Now I will read into the record this quotation from the witness' writings called *The Rights of Man*." He turned to Tom Paine. "You are the author of *The Rights of Man*? Mr. Burke, instruct the witness to answer yes or no."

"Answer yes or no," Mr. Burke instructed.

Tom Paine laughed. " 'Y God, that's the second time today. Th other feller asked me if I was the author of *Common Sense*. Well, I never laid no claim to it. I just uphold the one and use t'other."

Mugonnigle paid no attention to Tom Paine's answer. He was busy looking through his folders for the quotation he wanted to put into the record. G. Duncan Hare finally found it for him. "Thank you, Duncan," Mugonnigle said. G. Duncan Hare was nineteen and the most brilliant man in Washington in his age group.

"Let this be entered into the record. I want the American people to hear it. This is the statement. Listen closely and you will hear the clear voice of The Conspiracy. Here it is: 'It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plun'ige, but forgets the dying bird.' And further: 'Mr. Burke exclaims against

outrage; yet the greatest is that which himself has committed.’’ Mugonnigle stared into the television cameras, his face a mask of sorrow. ‘‘Ladies and gentlemen,’’ he began, but at that moment a note was finally passed to him by G. Duncan Hare. The note was from Congressman Haverford and contained information that had been given him earlier by Evans. The delay was caused by Haverford’s insistence on checking with the Library of Congress. He wasn’t going to stick his neck out. But he found it was true: Tom Paine the author had died in 1809. And even the fact that he had died in Greenwich Village wouldn’t be of much help.

Mugonnigle read the note. ‘‘Thank you, Duncan. I have just been reminded that I have another committee meeting at this time. I’m afraid I shall have to leave. I think I’ve got everything out of this witness that we’re going to get. Mr Burke, dismiss the witness.’’

‘‘Dismissed,’’ Burke said, sharp and incisive.

‘‘You *sue* you ain’t old Charlie Burke’s boy?’’ Tom asked.

## IS

THE Press was split. The pro-Mugonnigle news-papers ran large red headlines: TOM PAINE AN IMPOSTER. The anti-Mugonnigle Press, which always cloaked a flabby hand in a velvet glove, wrote: MUGONNIGLE'S MISTAKE. The Aintrey twins used the incident for a column that demanded the return to Congress of men of education and culture. Jefferson, they wrote, ought to be the model, in learning if not in ideas, for our legislators to follow. It was a rather daring stand.

Evans was reading the papers at his big desk outside Haverford's office. It was the morning of the next day. The second day of the hearing would start in an hour.

Evans read Maria excerpt from the Aintreys' column: "I wonder why it is that when anyone speaks of our learned and cultured Presidents they always begin and end with Jefferson?" he asked, putting down the paper.

But Maria was not to be drawn out. She asked, "And what does David Lawrence say?"

Evans perused the column. "He says that things

are not as bad as they seem, although they have hardly ever been worse."

"Hmmmm," Maria said, considering this.

"One bright young reporter took the false Tom Paine out to the airport. Seems he was in a hurry to get back to Montana and start campaigning. He is quoted as having said, 'I will be Governor of Montana one day. I only have to live long enough, old hoss.' " Evans sighed. "Qucer cove."

"I likcd him, Evans. 'When you've been here as long as I have . . .

"Heaven forfend."

" . . . you will see that there is something special and quite wonderful about those who aren't afraid of Mugonnigle. And what do you mean, Heaven forfend? I thought you liked it here."

"Perhaps it's just a touch of conscience, Maria. I believe it will pass with the hot weather. It's to do with that swamp beneath us, those miasmic mists and primal odours. I feel like Daisy Miller in Rome."

"I have known it to scourge a man, conscience."

"Yes?"

Maria nodded. "One of the witnesses, last winter, had an attack of it. None of the Washington doctors could diagnose it, never having seen it before."

"What finally happened, Maria?"

"He joined the Plymouth Brethren and was sent to India. So far as I know, his conscience was still inflamed at the time of his departure. I have hopes

that suffering and good works have long since eased his pain."

"It has been my experience that the exercise of conscience never cures it. One merely enlarges one's conscience the more one uses it."

"It does seem to be a pitfall fraught with danger," Maria said in her Pittsburgh U. manner.

"I suppose there comes some point when one must say, Too much is altogether too much."

"I confess it to you, Evans— and I don't care who hears it—that point has long since come for me. I have remained here out of inertia and to please my uncle, who likes to have some member of the family always keeping an eye on Haverford. Oh, Evans, had you but come a few months earlier I could have been spared much torment of spirit."

She dropped her eyes, the antique gesture that so moved Evans. They sat in silence for a moment, not even thinking of those things they could never talk about. It was terribly warm in the outer office, but Evans did not like to be in Haverford's air-conditioned one with Maria. The black leather sofa still oppressed him. He had no exorcised the vision yet.

"Let us go somewhere tonight, Maria," he suggested..

"Somewhere gay but quiet," she said, assenting.

"Do you know of such a place, Maria?"

"What had you in mind, Evans?"

"My rooms, I must confess. That is what I had in

mind. I would like to read you the first chapter of my thin novel about adultery in the suburbs. In spite of myself, it has turned out to be terribly funny."

"I suppose that often happens with adultery in the suburbs," Maria said in a tone of sad fatalism.

"If in my second novel I can succeed once more in keeping away from serious subjects and real content, I have no doubt that we will be rich and famous."

"Serious subjects and real content have a way of seeking out the most unwilling writers these days, Evans. I have noted this trend with mixed feelings. It is almost impossible these days to find an altogether trivial novel. If it is not the subject-matter, it is the author who takes himself seriously. And that comes to the same thing, does it not?"

• "I'm afraid it does, Maria."

"That is why I find myself more and more turning to the non-fiction books. They are invariably trivial and, these days, read more like fiction than do the novels."

A moment of silence followed her last remark and in the stillness they could hear the whirring of the recording machine that was installed under the desk.

Maria looked at her watch. "It is time we left. Past time. I'm afraid the hearing will have begun."

They arrived just as the first witness was being sworn in. They settled themselves in chairs immediately behind Haverford's. Evans looked up and recognized the witness just as Mugonnigle droned out, "You are Samuel Palfrey?"

"Good Lord," Evans said.

"And you are . . . the Information Officer at Linang Pinang in the country of Cambos? Is that correct?" Mugonnigle asked, pausing to suppress gas.

"That is correct," Sam said in the doleful voice Evans knew so well.

Mugonnigle shuffled through his papers and, with his head down, gave the curious impression that he was talking into his chin. "Now, young man, you were present in the Information Library when my assistants, R. John Burke and G. Duncan Hare, arrived to inspect the books. Is that correct?"

"That is correct."

"Did they make any requests of you?"

"Yes. They asked me . . ."

"I didn't ask you *what* they requested, merely *whether* they requested anything of you. That's a simple enough question. Even a Harvard man should be able to understand it." Mugonnigle grinned at the audience. It was a signal permitting laughter. There was laughter. "Let the record show there was laughter at this point," Mugonnigle said to the stenotypist. "Mr. Burke . . ."

"Yes, sir."

"Ask the witness what it was you requested of him."

"Yes, sir. Will you tell the Committee what it was that I and Mr. Hare requested of you?"

"You wanted to know who was responsible for choosing certain books."

"Certain books that you had on the shelves,"

Mugonnigle emended. "Certain books that were read by the people of Cambos. Isn't that true?"

"That is the reason for being of any library, that the books be available to the people of the community."

"Mr. Palfrey—may I call you Sam?—Sam, I'm not interested in your definition of a library. Let's get down to brass tacks here. I want to know why there were three copies of a book called *Tee-peo* on the shelves of your library. That is a book written by a man named . . ." he shuffled his papers and G. Duncan Hare leaned forward and whispered in his ear ". . . a man named Herman Melville. Thank you, Duncan. Now, Sam—and please understand, I'm not accusing you of anything—we only want to find out why there were *three* copies of this book *Tee-peo* by . . . Herman Melville. Do you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, tell us, Sam, tell us."

"You didn't ask me to tell you. You only asked did I know."

"Mr. Burke, please," Mugonnigle said, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Now then, Mr. Palfrey, why were *three* copies of that book on the shelves?"

"Because it was one of the most popular books in the library. There was so great a demand for it, as indeed there is for all of Melville's books—he is a great favourite in Cambos—that I ordered two more copies of each of his books."

Mugonnigle smiled sadly. The truth was out at last for all the American people to see. That is what his sad smile said. "Suppose I told you, Palfrey . . . that you were sowing the seeds, sowing the seeds, whether knowingly or unknowingly we do not know yet, sowing the seeds of The Conspiracy all over the little kingdom of Cambos? Suppose I told you that?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," Sam said sadly.

"I put it to you," Mugonnigle droned menacingly and his finger flashed—and forty flashbulbs flashed with it in a marvellous redundancy of light—"I put it to you, Palfrey, that you were ordered by your masters in The Conspiracy to give the widest possible distribution to the works of this so-called American writer, Howard Melville."

"Herman," Sam corrected.

Mugonnigle opened his folders. "I would like to read into the record . . . let me read this, let me read, let me read this to you." He often stammered with pretended excitement; it was his way of showing a boyish eagerness to Let the People Know.

"Here it is. Let me read some excerpts from this propaganda booklet that your Government, with your tax money, is distributing to our little brown brothers across the seas. Mind you, I will read only a short section. But it will be enough to give you an idea of the kind of poisonous stuff we are feeding to the native populations wherever they happen to be. Listen to this, for example. Listen to this:

" "The enormities perpetrated in the South Seas upon some of the inoffensive islanders well nigh pass belief. These things are seldom proclaimed at home; they happen at the very ends of the earth; they are done in a corner, and there is none to reveal them. But there is, nevertheless, many a petty trader that has navigated the Pacific whose course from island to island might be traced by a series of cold-blooded robberies, kidnappings, and murders, the iniquity of which might be considered almost sufficient to sink her guilty timbers to the bottom of the sea.'

"Those are *American* traders he is talking about, ladies and gentlemen. Now let me, let me, let me read you one more. Thank you, Duncan. Here it is. Listen to this now. Same book. Same writer. Howard Melville. Remember that name, ladies and gentlemen. *Howard Melville*. Listen to this:

" "We breathe nothing but vengeance, and equip armed vessels to traverse thousands of miles of ocean in order to execute summary punishment upon the offenders. On arriving at their destination, they burn, slaughter, and destroy, according to the tenor of written instructions, and sailing away from the scene of devastation, call upon all Christendom to applaud their courage and their justice."

Mugonnigle removed his glasses. He smiled bitterly; "I don't care what they say about me. I am going to

get the people responsible for this sort of thing. How are we ever going to win the minds of the free world if we persist in telling them the truth?"

He narrowed his eyes and pressed his lips together into a hard line. "Palfrey," he said, suppressing gas, "you're a young man, and I have little doubt, but what for your education, you'd have been a *fine* young man. I don't want to see you go to jail. Won't you make a clean breast of this terrible thing? Won't you tell us . . . won't you tell the American people . . . who is behind all this?"

"It's just Herman Melville," Sam said.

"We know all about the cell meetings you attended in Cambridge. Begin with that," Mugonnigle pleaded. "Tell us about the cell meetings."

"I'm afraid, Congressman, that I don't know what you're talking about. I've never been in a cell in my life."

"All right," Mugonnigle said, sighing, carrying the whole weight of this unadged, "all right. If that's the way you want it. Listen, the witness, Mr. Burke."

"I belonged to the Racquet Club at Philip Exminster Academy," Sam said, hopin' that would prove satisfactory.

"Dismissed," Burke said.

"And don't try to leave the country," Mugonnigle called after Palfrey as he left the hearing-room.

Matthew Hardison took the stand next; he winked at Evans as he passed the table. Evans had, after all, written the script for him. Evans, however, did not

feel pleased any longer. He knew what was going to happen.

Hardison, wearing a dark blue double-breasted suit and a stiff collar sat down and placed his hands together. It was meant to be a contemplative gesture, not a prayerful one. Yes, he said, in answer to Mugonnigle's question, he had been a courier for The Conspiracy in the Boston area. Yes, he often took messages to the Harvard cell; also, he added, he was responsible for and in sole charge of messages in the important triangle enclosed by Newton Centre, West Newton, and Newtonville. Evans, writing this, had thought of it as a particularly clever touch.

"And who was your contact at Harvard?" Mugonnigle asked.

"Hardison pursed his lips. He was recollecting. "My contact at Harvard was . . . Comrade Sam. I never knew his last name until he appeared here on the witness stand today."

"Samuel Palfrey, then, is Comrade Sam the Harvard Contact Man. Is that correct?"

"Yes sir."

Mugonnigle smiled. The cameras flashed. The reporters rushed for telephones. Evans ran into the corridor and searched for Sam, but he had gone. Maria found Evans sitting disconsolately on a marble slab.

"Evans," she cried, "what is the matter?"

"Oh my dear, it is my conscience. It is inflamed beyond bearing."

## I6

WAKING beside Maria in the early Saturday morning quiet, Evans reflected that there were many ways to forgetfulness, but none so pleasant as love; it was the tallest of ivory towers, and the most unassailable. Within it, even time moved differently: more slowly, yet faster. How quickly, discovering each other, they had also discovered daybreak at the windows, and were shamed into sleeping. And even love's sleep had a different order of things: after four hours he was awake, refreshed and ready for more, much more of it.

Without waking Maria, whose dark hair spread fan-like on the pillow was a part of every man's dream, Evans dressed and left the house.

Mrs. Rambler met him at the foot of the stairs with a knowing, appreciative smile. She had the Southern tolerance.

He returned in fifteen minutes with containers of orange-juice and coffee, the American breakfast that horrifies all of us, yet prepares us for a day of frenetic activity. He had also three papers, the day's news being essential to a repast of vitamins and nerves.

He put the brown-paper bag on the bed and, kissing her ear, said, "Wake up, my darling Maria. I have come bearing curious gifts."

"Dear Evans," she said, awake and articulate at once—a talent he was quick to admire, "dear Evans, your smallest remark is full of classical echoes. What a rich life we will have together!"

"I am certain of it, Maria," Evans said, his voice as close to emotion as a stoic could ever allow. Her shoulders, he noted, had more than the echo; they were, as were also the gifts she had brought him, altogether classical.

She sipped her coffee. His contained sugar and he stirred it with a plastic spoon that bore in gold letters the motto: "It's the George Washington for Drugs, Biologicals, and Fountain Service."

"I suppose you're wondering, Evans, why it is I drink my coffee before my orange-juice."

"I did not like to ask, Maria."

"It seems to me just *good sense* not to take acids on an empty stomach." She tapped the lid of the orange-juice container meaningfully; the poor cardboard thing became suddenly menacing.

"I daresay you're right, Maria. Certainly there is quite enough in our lives to provoke ulcers without throwing acids down there."

"You are thinking of yesterday, Evans, and your friend Sam Palfrey, that curious boy who admitted to membership in a Racquet Club?"

\*Evans nodded, with some of Palfrey's dolefulness.

"I was thinking, too, of Balzac's remark that men ought to swallow a toad every morning before breakfast. That way, nothing they see or do during the day will revolt them."

"What an odd thing for a realist to say. In my experience a toad seems to be a quite palatable dish compared to some I've seen here. Of course, my experience is limited to this city as it has been in the past four years. I understand that before my arrival it had, from time to time, showed some indications of promise, some sense that the fine early promise might possibly be fulfilled."

Evans sighed. "I think that all happened a good many years before your arrival. From where I sit, Boss Tweed looks like the leader of a Clean Government crusade."

"Just promise me, Evans, that you won't go off to India and give land away to the landless. I would have to go with you and I wouldn't like it at all. I understand the countryside is teeming with guilty Englishwomen determined to wipe out the memory of the Sepoy massacre."

"In our country the guilty are less conspicuous. They have the same colour skin as anyone else."

"It's no good eating toads or even gnawing vitals, Evans! If you feel this way, then you must act."

"Act? But my class doesn't *act*, Maria. We pretend not to have noticed."

"There comes a time when all things are possible, dear Evans. No matter what Mugonnigle and his

friends may think, Freedom is a necessity in this country of ours. We have gotten used to it and, being basically conservative, we are not going to exchange it for something new."

"It is a mark of your vigour, my dear, that you are thinking of Freedom, while I am thinking only of poor Sam Palfrey, who will surely go to jail because of a lie that I concocted."

"I'm afraid it *was* that Newton-Centre-Newtonville-West-Newton triangle business that gave Hardison's story the *ring of truth*."

Evans groaned and stretched out on the bed beside Maria. He stared at the ceiling. This room, he thought bitterly, this room that was to have been my log cabin, my Springfield.

Maria opened the top newspaper and gasped. The Aintreys' column began on the front page.

"What is it Maria?"

"Just a minute. Let me read it." Her eyes ran down the story under the headline: MELVILLE ISSUE TO BE RAISED IN U.N. BY KING OF CAMBOS.

"It seems that the boy King of Cambos . . ." Maria began.

Evans interrupted. "Isn't he the one who got married last year and the President sent him a Wurlitzer for a wedding gift?"

" . . . is a Melville enthusiast. The Aintrey twins met him on what they call their *junket* to the Far East last year. It appears that on his birthday every year the Cambos national radio broadcasts a paper

the King wrote on Melville. It's called *Pierre et Ishmael: Philosophe et Marinier*. Melville is so popular in Cambos that Mickey Spillane has been unable to gain a foothold. The King is also a jazz enthusiast. He plays the saxophone. The Aintreys say he is the greatest saxophonist the other side of the Moulmein Pagoda."

"I was certain we had not heard the last of this. Poor Melville. Poor Sam."

"Perhaps, Evans, we can prevail on Haverford to get him into the same jail with Arch Springer. It's an outdoorsy sort of place in West Virginia, and it's full of unco-operative intellectuals. It now has one of the best libraries in the Federal prison system."

"I wonder if it boasts three copies of *Tee-pee* by Howard Melville?"

"I hope you will never find out, my darling."

"But poor Sam. Weaving baskets. Something must be done, Maria." In his anguish he used incomplete sentences, a manner he ordinarily despised. It made reading the *Congressional Record* a constant torment.

Maria was aware that Evans' passivity—*something must be done*; not, *I must do something*—might be the momentary result of love. In the beginning love will satisfy every need. She would wait and hope that extreme satiety, which is a kind of boredom, would move him to action.

In mid-afternoon, being driven out by hunger, Evans and Maria went to the George Washington drugstore. Seated at a small table with a stainproof

surface behind a display of hot-water bottles, ice-bags, and comic books, they made their plans for the future. Evans wanted to go west, to Arizona or New Mexico, far from Washington, far from his certain-to-be-disappointed father. They would pack their belongings in Maria's car and start out on Monday, stopping in Maryland to be married.

They spent the late afternoon at Maria's apartment, packing her clothes and carrying suitcases and boxes to her car. Then they returned to Evans' rooms and he packed his books that were only such a short time out of their box.

In the evening they went walking, having still youth enough for that kind of excess. They came to a park that Evans had never seen before. There were stone or bronze—he could not tell in the moonlight—bison standing knee-deep in the grass, as if grazing there. There was a calmness to the scene that Evans found moving, the very stillness a part of the evocation of the heroic days on the plains, the great treks, the quiet, sacrificial spirit of men for a new nation they hardly understood. He wanted to sing *Shenandoah* but, punishing himself, did not. He felt it would not be fitting, that lovely song in his mouth.

"I have often wondered," Maria said, breaking into his melancholy thoughts, "why they put these bison here. We seem always to be reproaching ourselves for the sins of our grandfathers and we like to have reminders of their excesses always around us."

"We even put them on the nickel," Evans said.